

From Hell To Hell

by mcknight93

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Summary: Set around the beginning of Mass Effect 2 timeline, the Normandy SR-2 finds the Forward Unto Dawn. How will the Mass Effect universe change when the Master Chief is involved? All chapters have been rewritten and reposted with much improvements. The awesome picture rightfully belongs to: KnytGrey on deviantart.

1. Chapter 1

****New Author's Notes:** If you are reading this then, congratulations and thank you for finding the first rewritten chapter of my Halo/Mass Effect crossover, From Hell to Hell. My writing has really improved over the short time, I have been... well writing. It hasn't even been a year yet since I started. ******

****I** went back and read what I have wrote, which gave me the idea that I should rewrite the chapters to make them better in grammar, ideas, story, and etc. I just basically want to make the story better. So I am rewritting all of the chapters to make them better in every single way possible than their predecessors. ******

****So** anyway, here is the first rewritten chapter. Now I didn't really change a lot in the first chapter since it is a retelling og how Halo 3 ended, but I did fix some grammar mistakes. The main difference in the chapter is the last paragraph. There wasn't a lot I could work with. This is a short chapter compared to what I normally post now which is well over 10,000 words. But it will have to do since there is not a whole lot to write about in the chapter.******

****Even** though the retelling of the end of Halo 3 might be a little boring, I still think it is a little important to have it in there since some people might not know a lot about it. ******

****I** hope you enjoy it and leave a review.******

****Disclaimer:** I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie

or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware**

Prologue Chapter 1: The Ending that leads to a New Beginning

"That's it! Gun it Chief!" exclaimed Cortana

Master Chief then slammed his foot in the accelerator of the Warthog. The Warthog then made the jump towards the hangar of the UNSC frigate the "Forward Unto Dawn". The warthog bounced on impact with the hangar's floor, which caused it to flip and tumble further into the hangar.

The Elite and the Spartan recovered quickly from the crash, but soon the Dawn shifted to the right side of gravity. A Scorpion Tank began to slide towards the Arbiter, Thel Vadam then sprinted at a pile of crates to take cover. The UNSC tank then plowed right into the pile of crates. The Chief leaped over the Warthog and looked over to see the Arbiter digging out of the pile of crates unscathed. The Chief nodded at the Arbiter, and the Elite nodded back acknowledging the Spartan that he is alright. The Arbiter rushed to the bridge while Spartan-117 ran to the hangar panel and plugged in his trusted A.I. companion Cortana, so she can take control of this frigate. Cortana then appeared with her glowing, light blue, holographic form on the panel.

"Hang on!" the A.I. shouted.

Cortana ignited the thrusters at full burn and launched the Dawn at full speed away from the exploding Halo. The Chief grabbed onto the terminal, hanging on for dear life as the Dawn left Halo's atmosphere. As the Spartan tried to stay anchored, the Warthog flew out, which struck John on its way through the open hanger doors and out into empty space. The Chief flew off the panel, and then glided down the floor towards the doors, with the self-destructing Halo looming beneath. The Chief punched his fist hard into the floor to get a grip, halting near the back end of the hangar. Cortana reached out her arm towards him, scared of losing him.

"Chief!" Cortana yelled with worry in her voice.

The Scorpion flew out towards the Spartan. Seeing the tank looming towards him, Chief ducked his head just in time as the tank flew over him, narrowly missing the Chief. The Scorpion smashed the floor behind John-117 and fell back towards Halo. John began to climb back up to Cortana. After a few precious seconds passed, the Master Chief finally made it to the holotank that contained the A.I he went through the Flood infected High Charity.

Meanwhile, the Arbiter made it to the bridge and sat down at the controls.

Chief braced himself behind the panel. The Spartan reached his hand to the panel to recover Cortana's chip to plug her back into his helmet. The Spartan felt the cold sensation go through his body as his A.I. companion was once again in his MLJONIR Mark VI helmet.

"If we don't make it..." Cortana said sounding as if she was accepting death

"We'll make it." The luckiest Spartan replied confidence in his

voice

"It's been an honor serving with you, John." Said the A.I. using Chief's real name for the first time in a really long time.

The Master Chief finally rested his head back, exhausted from the events that occurred on Earth, the Ark, High Charity, and the new Halo. The Halo Installation suddenly exploded, which engulfed the hangar in a blinding white light. All goes blank as John closed his eyes.

****Earth****

There stood, on what is now UNSC's most important and respected memorial, Lord Hood, the Arbiter, and eight Marines armed with Battle Rifles.

Lord Hood now started one of mankind's greatest speeches. He took off his white military hat to pay respect for those who fallen and have made a huge contribute to the war.

"For us the storm has passed. The war is over." Lord Hood bowed his head to show his endearment, "But let us never forget those who journeyed into the howling dark and did not return. For their decision required courage beyond measure—sacrifice, and unshakable conviction that their fight, our fight, was elsewhere."

Flashbacks of the front half of the "_Forward Unto Dawn" _crashed into one of Earth's oceans. The UNSC arrived quickly onto the scene of the wreck with emergency boats, Pelican dropships, and UNSC Frigates. An engineering crew cutted into the Dawn with torches on a section of torned frigate that survived the Ark. The Arbiter emerged from the wreckage, and he looked over the humans before him. Even after the battle with the Covenant Loyalist over Earth, the ocean still looked as beautiful as ever.

****Back at the memorial****

The Arbiter watched the memorial, the Elite stood solemnly with the Marines. He listened to the UNSC's leader say his speech for the human's heroes that died in action to the onslaught of the Covenant and the horror of the Flood, so humanity can live on.

"As we start to rebuild, this hillside will remain barren, a memorial to heroes fallen. They ennobled all of us, and they shall not be forgotten."

Admiral Hood placed his hat back on, and saluted. The Sergeant of this honorable memorial turned to the other marines present at the event.

The Sergeant issued orders to the marines, "Present arms!"

Seven Marines raised their Battle Rifles with the pride and each fire a single burst of three shots: a 3-volley salute. The view panned over the Ark Portal, now closed and silent.

Later, Hood and the Arbiter stood alone at the Memorial, which appeared to be a Pelican wing, decorated with pictures of the fallen, including Commander Miranda Keyes and Sergeant Major Avery Johnson

and so many other soldiers that fought bravely for humanity.

"I remember how this war started. What your kind did to mine. I can't forgive you. But..."

Hood held out his hand to the Thel Vadam, the Arbiter.

"You have my thanks. For standing by him to the end." Lord said as he made a reference to the one who won them the war, Master Chief.

The Arbiter slowly shook Admiral Hood's hand with his own four fingered hand. After letting go, Hood turned to the memorial once more to look at a sad site that he thought he would never think they would ever see or really anyone would ever see, the Arbiter shared Lord Hood's sad gaze.

"Hard to believe he's dead." The UNSC leader said with sadness, still not wanting to believe the most famous Spartan, that won the war for the human race, is with other Spartans that are M.I.A. "_Maybe he can finally be at peace and be happy forever more_" Lord Hood thought.

The Elite in silver armor looked away towards the Assault Carrier, Shadow of Intent, which hovered silently in the sky of Earth.

"Were it so easy." The Arbiter finally spoke to Lord Hood. A phrase he said to Master Chief when he saw him on Earth, when the Spartan aimed a M9 Magnum at his throat.

Thel Vadam left the Memorial. His Separatist Phantom headed back to the Shadow of Intent, which still hovered in about the same position the Portal to the Ark once was. The Arbiter meet Shipmaster Rtas 'Vadam on the bridge. The white armored Elite with some missing mandibles looked at a holographic image of a planet.

"Things look different, without the Prophets' lies clouding my vision. I would like to see our own world to know that it is safe." Rtas 'Vadam said as if he is looking at his home world for the first time.

"Fear not. For we have made it so." The Arbiter spoke with pride and confidence.

The Arbiter clenched his fist to his chest, as a sign of honor.

"By your word, Arbiter." Supreme Commander, Rtas 'Vadam spoke with respect as he repeated the gesture the Thel Vadam made.

The Arbiter took a seat on the command chair, as he assumed command of the "Shadow of Intent". The silver armored Elite spun on his chair.

"Take us home." Thel Vadam commanded as he and every other Elite on the Assault Carrier, was eager to see their home planet, Sanhelios safe and sound.

The Shadow of Intent left Earth, to rejoin the remains of the Covenant Separatist fleet in space.

****Back to the memorial****

The camera showed that underneath the print "UNSCDF March 3, 2553", the number "117" is carved into the metal of the wing, next to a new medal for the hero that would of looked greatly with his other medals, and the rank of Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy is taped to the upper right of it as a tribute to the famous John-117.

****The back end of the "Forward Unto Dawn**_""_**

A feminine voice is spoke to a floating man in dark green armor.

"Chief? Chief? Can you hear me?"

The Master Chief, alive and awake, floated in zero gravity in a dark debris-filled hallway on board the Dawn.

"I thought I'd lost you, too." Cortana breathed a sigh of relief.

Chief turned on his helmet's lights and looked at a hole that was behind him in the hallway. He drifted to his floating MA5C Assault Rifle, and holstered it on the magnetic plates on his back. John-117 then began to drift towards hole at the end of the hallway.

"What happened?" The Spartan asked Cortana.

For once Cortana said three words that many people that wouldn't believe she would say.

"I'm not sure. When Halo fired, it shook itself to pieces. Did a number on the Ark. The Portal couldn't sustain itself. We made it through just as it collapsed."

The Chief reached the end of the hallway, which opened up into the vast empty space. 'The Forward Unto Dawn' looked as if it was cut half perfectly, it floated in a cloud of debris, with ends of it still literally red hot from the Slipspace cut.

"Well... some of us made it." Cortana then spoke with a little disappointment as she referred to the Arbiter who was nowhere to be found.

The Dawn's remaining half continued to drift aimlessly in unknown space. The Chief decided to glide further inside the ship, finding a row of cryotubes, complete with a holotank to plug Cortana into.

"But you did it. Truth and the Covenant, the Flood..." The Chief plugged Cortana's data chip into the holotank and she appeared on the holotank with her glowing blue form. "It's finished."

The Master Chief turned off the flashlight on his helmet. The Chief placed his Assault Rifle in one of the rackets on the wall, so he could grab it incase anything happens.

"I'll drop a beacon. But it'll be a while before anyone finds us." Cortana said sadly.

The man climbed into the cryotube that was in-front of Cortana's holotank and next to the rack where he placed his MA5C ICWS Assault Rifle.

"Years, even." Which disheartened John since Cortana can only be active for seven years before she thought herself to death. The Master Chief began to think what he would do without Cortana in his life, but his thoughts were quickly interrupted, as the cryotube door began to close.

"I'll miss you." The A.I.'s words were filled with emotion that you would never thought a computer would ever have; sadness and care.

"Wake me when you need me." Master Chief spoke his final words to his last living friend on the half of the Dawn.

Cortana smiled and nodded her holographic head to John. The cryotube closed and sealed itself, which froze the Master Chief. Finally, the rest that Spartan 117 needed since he first encountered the Halos.

Cortana dropped the Dawn's beacon, hoping the message will get found so she and Master Chief could one day be saved.

Unbeknownst to the Spartan and A.I. that this ending of the War, the Covenant, the Flood, Halo, and the Ark, opened up a whole new beginning and doorway to a universe that would change the life of the first human Spectre and his highly skilled team on his ship. The fight may have been finished but a whole new war was just beginning, a war against a timeless race of synthetic organic machines, that was known as, the Reapers.

****Old Author's Notes: Thought I retell the ending of Halo 3 to get a good setting and that it is an easy chapter to post. REVIEW!****

****New Author's Notes: If you have gotten this far, then thank you for rereading the first chapter. Even though it is the retelling of the ending of Halo 3, I think it is pretty important to put the chapter in it.****

****I usually update a chapter for each of my stories in a certain order.****

****I hope you liked the chapter, and I really hope you leave a review.****

2. Chapter 2

****New Author's Notes: Well here is the re-written version chapter two for the Halo/Mass Effect crossover 'From Hell to Hell.' I fixed several errors, added a few things, and changed a few aspects. Now this covers where Master Chief meets Shepard and his team. I hope you enjoy it.****

****Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware. Enjoy the chapter ****

****Old Author's Notes:**** ****I am calling Shepard's first name John because that is the default name I won't using his name that much though so there won't be any confusion****

Chapter 2: The Lost Get Found

****Normandy SR-2, Captain's Cabin****

Commander John Shepard, Savior of the Blitz and former Spectre for humanity, was actually quite satisfied at how well things were going on the recruiting mission. So far, he had gone to Omega and ended a disease killing anything that wasn't human or Vorchas, while recruiting the Salarian Doctor and former STG Mordin Solus who was essential in repelling the Reaper threat. While on Omega, Shepard recruited the Turian Archangel who turned out to be his old friend and comrade from two years ago Garrus Vakarian, a former C-Sec officer and professional sniper. When the two were reunited, they made a huge dent in the operations of the three biggest mercenary companies, the Blue Suns, Blood Pack, and the Eclipse. And finally he recruited Zaeed Massani, an experienced, violent, and lethal mercenary who shoots first and gets paid upfront.

The Normandy SR-2 was now headed towards a Blue Sun prison ship called the Purgatory, to recruit a very powerful biotic. Unfortunately, the strong biotic was also one of the most dangerous convicts named Jack, but was also known as Subject Zero on the dossier.

Joker piloted the new and improved ship of the Normandy to a Mass Relay closest to the Purgatory, which meant it would be a little while before they arrived to recruit Jack. So Shepard had some time to kill, and to kill the time he decided to catch up on much needed sleep. The second his head met his pillow on his comfy bed, EDI, the artificial intelligence of the ship, voice's rang through the room that belonged to the Commander.

EDI spoke in a monotone but female voice,

"Shepard the Illusive man requires a meeting with you"

"_Perfect_" Shepard thought with sarcasm,

"I will be right down EDI."

With a loud and irritable groan, Shepard got up from his bed and walked to the elevator, he tried his hardest not to trudge. Shepard went from the first floor to the second and exited the elevator. As he got out Shepard nodded or said "hi" to any passing fellow Cerberus crew Commander also acknowledged Cerberus Operative Jacob Taylor in the armory when he passed by, trying to keep his posture.

Shepard entered the meeting room and suddenly the large rectangular table in the room descended into the floor. An orange light enveloped the former Spectre and before he knew it Shepard was before the Illusive Man, who was smoking a cigar and sitting in his usual chair.

The Illusive took a puff from his cigar,

"Shepard how goes the mission?"

Shepard folded his arms across his chest and had an unamused look on his face.

"It was going great until you interrupted my mission on another recruit. Is there something important you want to tell me or can we both get back to business, I save the galaxy and you sitting on your ass."

Illusive Man didn't show any hurt from the comment the Commander made, instead he actually smirked at Shepard's attitude,

"Now, now Shepard no need to be hostile. All I want from you right now is to go on a simple investigative and reconnaissance mission for me."

"If it is so simple then why send me and not some other Cerberus agents; I am kind of busy in case you have forgotten already." The former Spectre replied with a little anger in his voice.

Illusive Man took another huff from his cigar,

"I haven't forgotten but let's get to the matter at hands. Cerberus has detected a distress beacon from a ship of unknown origins." The Illusive Man's bright blue computerized eyes studied Shepard, to see how the hero of the Citadel would react to such strange news.

Shepard eyes widen a little after he heard about a ship that even Cerberus didn't know everything about.

"Go on"

The Cerberus leader smirked slightly on how he gained the soldier's attention. He knew he had the Commander hooked.

"We need you investigate this anomaly and find out what it is and possibly salvage anything that looks important. I imagine since the ship is of unknown origins, it must have some valuable equipment. It would greatly aid Cerberus if something is found."

Shepard brought his hand to his mouth in a thinking position to give some thought on the Illusive Man's mission. It didn't take long for the hero of the Blitz, to come to a conclusion.

"Alright, I will do it, but try not to waste my time anymore with any more simple missions. The Reapers are the main concern." The hero of the Blitz spoke as he hoped that he could finally get the weight off his shoulders that he owed Cerberus

"Don't worry Shepard, I am sure we will be doing business sooner than you know. I sent the coordinates to the mysterious ship, to EDI already. Get the job done Shepard." When the Illusive Man finished his sentence he smoked his cigar once more and he then he ended the communications between him and Shepard.

Shepard blinked to adjust his eyes.

"EDI, plot a course for the destination with the coordinates the Illusive Man gave us, we got another mission." Shepard said.

"Roger that Shepard changing course." EDI's voice rang through the room, as she obeyed the orders.

The Normandy SR-2 changed course, much to the discomfort of Joker, and was now headed towards their new objective.

It would be four hours until they would arrive at the destination, so Commander Shepard took a three hour nap, and had an hour to discuss a mission plan and tactics with his squad. The Normandy's captain was going to bring his whole squad with him which consisted of Miranda, Garrus, Jacob, Mordin, Zaeed, and himself. Shepard decided to bring the whole team, as he wanted to sweep the entire ship as quick as possible. The team would then explore the ship and find anything useful on the ship like history logs, equipment, or even weapons.

****Few Hours later****

The Normandy SR-2 soon arrived at the mysterious ship. Joker flew the Normandy very close to the ship, close enough to where everyone was able to see the ship through port side windows. When the crew looked through a window, everyone was completely shocked at what they saw.

The ghost ship floated aimlessly in space, with small debris around it. The ship itself was large, grey, blocky, and looked very much abandoned. The strange ship was much bigger than the Normandy as well, to where it dwarfed the Normandy SR-2.

Joker piloted the Normandy to where it circled around the anomaly ship, and it was then that everyone saw that the ship had letters written on the side that were actually in English!

But the thing that surprised the Cerberus crew the most was what was actually missing from the ship! The ship was completely cut in half like if it was butter that got cut with a hot knife. The hole on the ship was big enough swallow up the Normandy whole. Many Cerberus crewmen talked amongst themselves where said things like

"What could have done this to a vessel like that?"

"Is there a weapon that could do that?"

"Where is the other half?"

"Who owned the ship?"

Shepard walked up to the cockpit of the Normandy, where the helmsman, Jeff 'Joker' Moreau was stationed. He was able to get a good look of the ominous ship that floated in the dark space, through the windows at the cockpit.

"Is anyone else kind of creeped out by that thing?" Joker asked not taking his eyes off the ship but was still able to pilot the Normandy.

"EDI, what can you tell me about the ship?" Shepard asked.

EDI's bright blue orb shaped avatar, popped up on the console near

Joker's left side.

"I am not picking up any signs mass effect fields or Element Zero. It is unknown how the ship was able to run without those components."

Overhearing the A.I, Garrus coughed up from the surprise and then walked up next to Shepard in the cockpit.

"Wait, that ship has no eezo! It dwarfs the Normandy! How does it even run?" The Turian exclaimed leaving a gaping hole with his part flesh part cybernetic mouth.

The rest of the squad walked up near the cockpit, ready for the mission.

"English text written on the vessel, possibly human origin." Mordin said in his usual fast paced tone.

"Maybe the Alliance made it?" Jacob asked with his shoulders raised in a questioning manner.

"If the Alliance made it, Cerberus would have known it about it, even before it was made." Miranda spoke up with her hand on her hip.

"Alright everyone lock and load we got a mission!" Shepard declared while he tried his hardest to not be surprised and stay focus on the mission ahead.

The six person team then loaded up into the Normandy's shuttle in the cargo bay and they departed for unknown frigate. Unbeknownst to them that what lied inside the ship, was already expecting them.

****_Inside the UNSC Frigate the 'Forward Unto Dawn'_****

Inside the legendary ship a light blue beam flickered on a pedestal, soon parts of the frigate came alive once more. The UNSC Artificial Intelligence that came online was named Cortana. She successfully turned on parts the ship without much trouble, but what she needed to do was awaken the sleeping metal giant inside the cryotube. So she began to her to speak her FAITHFUL guardian.

"Chief! John, wake up! I need you! Wake up John! Chief!"

The Spartan stirred in his cryo slumber, which shook off some of the frost from his MJLONIR armor. Finally, the Master Chief woke up and activated his helmet's lights. In the blink of an eye he threw open the frozen glass door of the cryo pod and leaped out of the pod that once contained him. John latched onto the pedestal and looked at Cortana, while he floated in the ship where there was no gravity.

"I'm here." He said as got in front of his A.I.

"Chief, we've got company and some of them don't look human!" Cortana spoke with a little worry in her voice.

Chief activated his magnetic boots on his armor, to stick to the

floor since they were still in zero gravity, and looked at his last known companion.

"Is it the Covenant Separatists or the Insurrectionist?" The Spartan questioned as tried to think of what faction that could compose of alien and human team.

"Negative, they don't match any bio-signatures we have ever seen, though one of them looks like an Elite while the other looks like a Prophet. All of them look to be well armed and the ship they have doesn't match anything within the UNSC or Covenant." Cortana said as she scanned the intruders through what was left of the power system within the Dawn.

The Master Chief thought of what to do of this situation and he came up with a plan.

"Try to lead them to us and if they ask any questions, answer only basic information" With that said Spartan-117 went over to pick up the MA5C Assault Rifle he placed near cryotube before he went to sleep. Chief checked the ammo and saw that it still had a full clip in it still, it wasn't much but it would have to do. He then went to find a place to conceal himself from the visitors.

"So are we going to greet out guests with your charming personality or are we going to do the same old Spartan tradition, guns blazing."

Master Chief said only one word.

"Both."

****_Back with Shepard and his team a few minutes earlier_****

The Cerberus Kodiak shuttle landed inside the gaping hole of the ship and the shuttle's door opened up revealing the six members. All of them activated their magnetic boots so they can walk freely among the ship. Everyone was also sealed up in their suits or carried breathers, so they would be able to breath along the trip.

Shepard turned and spoke to his teammates.

"Everyone stays together so we can get through this quick."

The squad simply nodded and followed their Commander's orders and began exploration of the ship. Each Normandy team member carefully looked around the strange ship, each one of them held their own specialized weapon in their arms.

"Looks like someone left the lights on." Garrus observed as their was somehow power in the ship.

"How the hell is this stuff working when half of the bloody ship is gone?" Zaeed said outloud, on what was everyone's minds.

"Alternative power supply, back up generator. Curious to how its working without eezo. Would very much like to observe." Mordin spoke with a scientific curiosity.

"Cerberus could use something like that. We need to find it and get it aboard the Normandy." Miranda said.

As they continued their mission they didn't find much, just a few empty rooms and halls with debris floating around in the ship. But as they got deeper in the ship, things were different like how they noticed arrows on the floor that pointed to some doors and hallways with words written in English on them like 'Mess Hall' and 'Crew Quarters'. They searched the rooms, but didn't find much except more evidence that it was a human ship as it had human food in the cafeteria and pictures of humans.

"Does the abbreviation, U.N.S.C. mean anything to any of you?" Jacob asked when the squad left the crew quarters area.

"I found it on some clothes and dog tags back there, but none of them completely spelled it out." Jacob continued.

"This must be a military ship since there is dog tags on it." Shepard said with observation.

"Or they had mercenaries aboard." Zaeed added as he recalled that some mercs kept their dog tags even when they left the armed forces.

"Does anyone else get the feeling that we are being watched?" Garrus said with unease as he looked everywhere to see who could be watching them. His finger was now closer to the trigger on his M-92 Mantis.

"Yeah, something doesn't feel right." Jacob agreed, as he held his M-22 Eviscerator tighter.

"Keep your eyes up, something could be waiting for us here." Shepard cautioned everyone.

The team agreed in unison and walked further in the ship.

The squad soon reached an impasse as there were two different routes with arrows on the ground. The arrow on the left said "Cryobay" and the one on the right said "Armory".

In a brief moment the former Spectre then came up with a plan.

"Alright we are going to have to split up from here. Garrus you take Zaeed and Mordin and go to the cryobay and find what you can in there, while me, Miranda, and Jacob will go to the armory and try find what type of weapons these unknowns used."

"Put me with a crazy merc and a doctor that doesn't shut up, why not give me a dog that is scared of everything and a hippie that eats a lot." Garrus said with sarcasm.

"Shut it, split lip. I'm not happy working with your sorry ass." Zaeed growled in anger.

"Both of you calm down. We won't get anything accomplished when we are at each others throats. Just look around and you guys will be fine."

Garrus sighed.

"Alright let's move radio us if something comes up."

"Same goes for you." Shepard replied to his comment.

Now the teams were divided and were headed their separate ways. Garrus and his team were near the cryobay, and when the door to the cryobay opened, they saw quite a surprising sight. The room was freezing, and snow was fall everywhere with piles of snow under the lined up cryo pods.

"Snow? What kind of goddamn ship is this?" Zaeed asked as he watched the snow float without gravity.

"Leakage from cryo pod, most likely. Cause snow droplets and temperature. Common occurence in damaged ships." Mordin answered.

"Rrrright, spread out and yell if you find something interesting." Garrus said.

The small three man team spread out and searched the cryo bay. After a few minutes of searching, they spotted a glowing terminal in the middle of the cold cryo bay. The three commandos headed for the strange light and soon a blue glowing form of a human female popped up from the terminal.

"Welcome to the cryobay of the UNSC frigate, the Forward Unto Dawn. I am CTN 0452-9, but you may call me Cortana, how can I help you?" She said in a monotone voice.

"_A V.I.? This may help us explain what happened to this ship and its crew_." Garrus thought to himself.

Garrus brought his hand up to his trademark Kuwashil visor to message to his superior officer about the V.I.

"Shepard, we found a V.I. on this ship. I am going to start asking it some questions that could explain some of the origins of this ship."

"We are on our way to you, we couldn't open the doors to the armory anyway, they seemed to be locked." Shepard answered back through the radio in his helmet.

"We will meet you here then, Shepard." Garrus then turned to the V.I. known as Cortana with some questions running through his mind.

"What is this UNSC?"

"The United Nations Space Command is a military branch of Earth and all of the human race's colonies." Cortana spoke as like if she was a dumb A.I. to sell the deception.

Garrus was shocked to hear about this UNSC for he has never of a military name like it, but proceeded to ask questions. He would indeed need to ask it the V.I. more on the issue, but he had to deal with more pressing issues.

"What happened to the crew of this ship?"

"The crew of the Forward Unto Dawn had been evacuated to ensure their safety from the [CLASSIFIED] threat.'"Cortana replied to his question with a simple answer.

"Wait, what was the threat?"

"[CLASSIFIED]"

Garrus was a little taken back the response, but continued to question her.

"Alright then, what happened to this ship?"

"[CLASSIFIED]" Cortana repeated.

Zaeed, who was now pretty angry from not finding out what happened much from a malfunctioning V.I. and that they wasted so much time on a ghost ship that could have been just a floating piece of junk, made him furious. He then walked up to the program.

"Tell us what happened to this god damn ship!"

"[CLASSIFIED]"

"Unclassify it then you stupid machine!" The merc yelled as he tried his best to not blow up the annoying program into oblivion.

"[CLASSIFIED]"

Zaeed then raised his gun at the uncooperative V.I.

"I will classify you, bitch!"

But before he could pull the trigger, Cortana spoke in her natural voice, and raised her hand to Zaeed.

"I wouldn't do that if I were you." Cortana warned.

The three Normandy commandos were taken back that the V.I. was now speaking like a normal person. But Zaeed still was pretty pissed at it, so he pressed on.

"What! And who is going to stop me?"

Cortana then pointed her finger behind him.

"He is."

Zaeed turned around, and suddenly two metal boots slammed into his chest and sent him flying across the whole room, where he hit the wall hard, at the end of the cryoroom, which knocked the mercenary out cold.

The green being then jumped down from the ceiling and ran at Garrus. Before Garrus could shoot the speeding green demon with his sniper

rifle, he was punched in the stomach the hardest he has ever been in his life, knocking the breath out of him within his helmet and then passed out.

Mordin aimed his M-4 Shuriken submachine-gun at the green goliath, but the armored being simply kicked Garrus's body. Garrus's unconscious body flew and hit Mordin, which knocked him down on his back. Even though Garrus was knocked out, his magnetic boots were still active and connected to the floor when he hit Mordin, so it kept Mordin pinned to the ground. The Salarian doctor noticed the giant green sprinted at him at an incredibly speed, so Mordin threw Garrus's unconscious form, off him, but was got off guard at what happen next. The humanoid creature picked up Mordin by his head and slammed him down on the ground hard enough to send Mordin Solus in a unconscious state.

****Master Chief's POV****

Chief looked around at what damage he had caused. He looked at the strange two aliens. Cortana was right, as one looked greatly similar to an Elite and the other skinnier one looked like a Prophet.

"Wow, you didn't even need to use your Assault Rifle, too bad because you love that gun, oh well you saved bullets." Cortana said when she looked at Chief's work.

When the Spartan fought the three strange intruders, he knew he could have killed them with his bare hands, but he had held back his strength so he could keep them alive for interrogation.

"Chief! Three contacts coming in." Cortana exclaimed.

The Master Chief simply nodded and went to hide once more.

****Normal POV****

Shepard, Miranda, and Jacob walked into the cryobay only to gasp at what they saw. All three of their teammates were somehow out cold and no threat was there to cause all of it. Garrus, Zaeed, and Mordin all hard trained and deadly individuals were on the spread out on the floor and not moving.

"What could have done this?" Shepard said to Miranda and Jacob.

Before everyone was able to pull out their respective weapons and find out who harmed their comrades. A strong and threatening voice spoke behind the three Cerberus humans.

"Me".

Shepard then felt the barrel of a gun on the back of his head and heard the voice speak once more.

"Put your hands up and turn around."

Shepard and company cooperated and slowly turned around with their hands in air and were once again surprised at what they saw that the ship contained. There they saw a giant seven foot humanoid figure clad in dark green armor with a gold visor that showed their

reflection, where his eyes should be, and he was pointing a strange gray gun at them. Commander Shepard wasn't really sure to what make of this situation.

"Who the bloody hell are you?" Miranda demanded instead od asked, even under the stressful situation.

Then finally Jacob spoke to possibly to ease the tension in the room.

"Damn."

****New Author's Notes: Well I hope you enjoyed the chapter, I fixed several errors. The rewritten chapter three will be up soon.****

****Old Author's Notes: Well that was chapter two, I really liked this chapter since it is the first meeting of Master Chief and Shepard. This was also a good chance of me to do a combat scene and show John-117 is a boss.****

****Hoped you enjoy this chapter and REVIEW!****

3. Chapter 3

****Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware. Enjoy the chapter****

Chapter 3: The Master Chief is Onboard

****Cryo-room, UNSC frigate Forward Unto Dawn****

Shepard turned his attention to the giant being in green armor that had him and his two squad members at gunpoint. Their adrenaline was high from the tense situation and deadly silent. They had faced similar events at being held at gun point and if there were a few things he had learned from them, it was to have a quick trigger finger or a good choice of words.

"My name is Commander Shepard former Alliance solider and former Spectre. We mean you no harm. We came because we heard the distress the beacon. Can I get a name from you or a race?"

Despite the one who held the gun, John-117 was at a disadvantage from what he had heard from the human. The Master Chief was confused, he had never heard of this Alliance or the rank of Spectre, besides the vehicle the Elites or Brutes usually drove. The first thought that came to mind was that he assumed the person tried to lie to him so he could stall for a reason. But, Chief felt something strange stir in his gut something that told him that the person wasn't lying. And one thing his old mentor and father like figure, Chief Mendez, had taught him was to always listen to your gut.

"Master Chief Petty Officer Spartan-117, human."

"_Wow this guy is human? He is so huge though, and never heard of a Spartan rank? He sounds like a military man so talking to him might be a challenge, but I still didn't get a name." _Shepard thought to himself in confusion.

_ "Is there any chance you can give me your real name? It might make talking a little easier." Shepard asked as he hoped to disarm the stressful moment.

"No." the Spartan simply replied.

"We're wasting time here, Shepard." Miranda said in an irritated tone, while she kept a venomous glare at the green goliath, but did not lower her arms.

Shepard squinted his eyes to see if he could see past the golden visor of the one known as Master Chief, but it was of no use as all he got was a golden reflection of himself.

"What's this 'Alliance' or 'Cerberus?' What happened to the UNSC? Are you apart of the Covenant Separatists or the Insurrection?" Master Chief asked, as he kept his finger ready to pull the trigger on a moment's notice.

He has never heard of the Human System Alliance? Where is this guy from? Is he actually human? Shepard's mind boggled with questions. There were so many that his head began to hurt and being held at gunpoint didn't help the migraine.

"Okay, I have never heard of this 'UNSC' or of any 'Separatists' or 'Insurrection. But look, I told you we came here in response to the ship's distress beacon and we mean you know harm. We can keep talking on this dead ship or we can provide you transport in my ship that works." Shepard waited a moment, as he looked for some kind of reaction from the metal giant, which was a little hard trying to read the man since the Commander couldn't look the Spartan in the eyes with his reflective visor.

"I would like to also check on my crew that you just knocked out. Any particular reason why you did that or why were you hiding?"

Chief lowered his assault rifle slightly, though he was very capable of pulling the trigger if needed to.

"They were about to attack vital cargo, I didn't want anything happen to it. I didn't kill your allies, they were kept alive for interrogation." Chief informed.

"Interrogation?" Jacob said out loud in disbelief.

"That doesn't explain why you were hiding." Miranda said with her Australian accent, but the tone sounded almost like if she accused him of something.

"The first time we had encountered unknown aliens, they didn't respond to us very peacefully." The Spartan replied.

Shepard, Jacob, and Miranda all three exchanged quick glances between each other, as the statement raised more questions than actual answers. But then the former Spectre spoke up.

"So what do you say? Do we have a deal?" Commander asked though he didn't lower his hand for a handshake, in case Master Chief would mistake it for a hostile move.

The Spartan stood there like if he was deep in thought, but he did eventually come up with an answer.

"I will go with you, but I will need to gather some of my equipment. You can take whatever you want as long it isn't a weapon, and most of the doors will be unlocked."

Both Jacob Taylor and the former Spectre were slightly relaxed from the news, but as for Miranda... well she still looked somewhat agitated. All three humans lowered their hands gently, but kept their eyes on Master Chief.

Despite the fact that he did not trust him and the situation from earlier, Shepard couldn't help but to feel amazed about the guy. Master Chief was able to knock out three of his armed squad mates within a few seconds with his bare hands, Shepard knew he did it with his hands, otherwise there would be smoking bullet holes in his companions. Plus the sizeable fist and boot size dents in their armor supported his evidence. It was also harder to knock out or stun than kill someone, but that man did it without getting harmed at all.

Though the soldier just pointed a gun at his face and threatened to shoot him, and fought his squad mates, Shepard had thoughts about recruiting the Spartan for he was an excellent combatant and he was going to need all the help he can get against the Collectors. Yeah it seemed crazy to recruit the person he just met, but after he read some of the dossiers of the other potential recruits... well they seemed even more insane than the Master Chief. Shepard wasn't looking for friends, he was looking soldiers.

The Spartan walked over to a pedestal in the room, removed a chip that glowed and flickered with a light blue color, and placed it in his helmet.

"Alright, I will have my ship dock with yours. I'll be waiting to greet you when you're ready." Commander Shepard casually informed the Spartan.

The Spartan only gave a slight nod in response and made off down the corridor. He left the former Spectre to take care of his unlucky commandos.

The hero of the Blitz moved to go help his unconscious team, fortunately the zero gravity would no doubt make it easier moving them around. Both Miranda and Jacob, realized that the danger was now over, and turned to help him. This day might have gotten even better if he can recruit this soldier to their cause.

Jacob Taylor went to help the unconscious Zaeed Massani at the end of the room, while Miranda Lawson went to help Mordin Solus, who was knocked out in the middle of the room. Both Cerberus operatives applied some medi-gel to their unfortunate allies, to heal their wounds.

Miranda watched with icy eyes, as the man in the dark green armor left. Her curiosity screamed at her to find out who or what he was, and find out what made him capable enough to knock out Garrus, Mordin, and Zaeed at once. Miranda got up and started to trail the

mysterious person at a fairly good and unnoticeable distance.

"Shepard, I am going to... take care of something." Miranda said as she nearly walked out of the cryo-room.

Commander Shepard had a pretty good idea Miss Lawson was about to engage in something that had to do with Master Chief. Though he knew Miranda was a very capable woman, he wasn't entirely on board with the idea of her trying something that could enrage a person that knocked three of his teammates with ease.

"Miranda, I don't thin..."

"I'll be fine, Shepard." Miranda interrupted as she left the cryo-room and followed the Spartan.

The former Spectre sighed, as Miranda Lawson was almost impossible to stop when she had her mind set on something. But he really did not want to end up with four wounded and unconscious squad mates, or even possibly a provoked person that might just go on a killing spree. But somehow he knew in his gut that Miranda would be okay. So he let her go and tended to his injured squad mates.

With Chief and Cortana aboard the Forward Unto Dawn near the armory

"Thanks for saving me again, Chief, but I don't like the idea of calling me cargo, it makes me feel fat." Cortana pouted inside Master Chief's helmet.

Chief was happy to hear that the A.I. was okay and not harmed from the man he kicked across the hall of the cryoroom.

"I didn't want to reveal you, otherwise they might had taken you and then I would had to kill them." Master Chief said as he walked through the halls of the Dawn.

"You really are a caveman sometimes, you know that right?" Cortana joked with the hero of humanity.

Suddenly, John-117 noticed a dot on his motion tracker that said something was not too far behind him.

"Looks like we got a follower on your six." Cortana chimed in through the MJLONIR helmet.

Master Chief kept walking with his helmet pointed straight in the direction of the armory. But he did looked through the side of his helmet to see who followed him. The person stuck to the shadows and dark areas of the halls, and hid behind corners and walkways. Despite how dark it was, Chief was able to see who was the one who stalked him. It was the human woman who that was with the other two men from the cryo-room.

"I'll lock the armory door, when we get through. Wouldn't want her to take a few of our toys, now would we?" Cortana said with confidence.

The duo finally reached their destination, the armory. With what

little power left in the UNSC frigate, the metal door to the armory slid opened automatically. When the Spartan walked through, the doors closed on their own. But the green lights on the armory door switched to a bright red, to signify that the door was locked.

When Miranda Lawson saw that the color on the door had changed, she knew something was wrong. Once Miranda knew she wouldn't get caught, she moved to the door in a silent manner. Unlike the soldier, the door did not open automatically for the Cerberus officer. Miranda stepped back and studied the door for any hints to open the door.

On the left side of the door, Miranda noticed a control pad with a set of buttons. Miranda smirked with satisfaction, and then pressed a few buttons. But unfortunately for her, the door then not open. Miranda tried at the controls a few more times, but she did not succeed. She then activated her omni-tool to bypass the door's security lock, but even that failed her as, for some reason her omni-tool couldn't even make a connection to the slammed a balled up fist in anger on the control pad.

"Bugger!" Miranda quietly swore in a whisper.

Like before, Miranda stepped back and studied the door once more, to try to open it, but this time there seemed to be no other way. For a second and a second only, Miranda thought she could blast or pry the door open with her biotics. But she brushed off the idea, when she realized she could possibly destroy the equipment or alert the man in the dark green armor. The Cerberus officer folded her arms across her chest as she was annoyed in her predicament.

But it was then a devious smile formed on Miranda's near perfect lips when she recalled that the green armored person said he was left to grab some equipment, and they were about to give the person a ride on their ship, Cerberus' ship.

"_He would be bringing the stuff right to me. I just have to think of a more... conventual means of getting them without him knowing."_ Miranda thought to herself in a clever manner.

In her moment of victory, Miranda unwillingly looked to the floor, where she noticed a green arrow that pointed to the closed door in front of her.

"Bloody hell!" Miranda Lawson swore as she realized that she missed her perfect opportunity to collect a few weapons to send back to Cerberus, and learn about them and possibly mass produce them for humanity's gain.

But Miranda calmed herself. She was a patient and smart individual, so she would wait and plan on how to get her hands on the weapons that the Master Chief would bring. Of course she now knew that she would have to be more careful, since he could possibly use the weapons against her with lethal force.

So Miranda unfolded her arms, and left to board the Kodiak shuttle that would take her back to the Normandy SR-2.

But if one listened closely, they would had heard a female A.I. snicker behind the closed door.

****In the Forward Unto Dawn's armory****

******That should hold her off for a while." Cortana gloated inside Chief's armor.**

Usually the weapons were on racks and cases, but with the Dawn in the shape it was in now and the zero gravity, the weapons floated aimlessly around the room. There were some Covenant weapons that floated around as well, they most likely came from the Arbiter and the other Covenant Separatists that were on the frigate that aided them on the Ark.

"You might want to pick up mainly Covenant weapons, I scanned their armor and weapons and they seemed to be made of some sort of dark energy type. They have their own personal shields made from the same material, but don't worry your shields are better than theirs. Their shields seem to have a kinetic barrier that protects them against bullets and other small projectiles but not against extreme temperature, toxins, or radiation. So Covenant plasma technology should be really effective against their shields and armor."

Chief sighed. He preferred using UNSC technology since he grew up with those weapons, but a Spartan was more than capable of adjusting and was very good at adapting.

Spartan-117 started to get some duffel bags and some backpacks and loaded them with many Covenant weapons and a few UNSC weapons like the SRS99D S2 AM Sniper Rifle, 319 Individual Grenade Launcher, and the M41 Surface to Surface Rocket Medium Anti Vehicle Assault Weapon Rocket Launcher, and one of his favorites and probably the most deadly the M6 Grindell Galilean Nonlinear Rifle Spartan Laser.

He also grabbed several Covenant weapons, such as the Type-25 Directed Energy Pistol also known as the Plasma Pistol, the Type-33 Guided Munitions Launcher otherwise known as the Needler, the Type-33 Light Anti-Armor Weapon called the Fuel Rod Gun, and several others.

Chief grabbed a few repair kits and power packs so he could keep his MJOLNIR armor in check for a while. He also grabbed many grenades like fragmentation, plasma, spike, and incendiary grenades.

Master Chief grabbed as much ammo as he could for the UNSC weapons and the Covenant weapons, as well as a few battery packs to recharge the Spartan Laser for a few more uses. Chief knew he had enough ammo to last for a long time, but there was no guarantee he could find more ammo anytime soon.

The Spartan was about to finally leave the armory with several duffel bags and backpacks, but was stopped when a floating datapad bumped into his helmet. Chief dropped one of the many bags from his hand and grabbed the pesky datapad.

"The datapad still has power, how about we read few entires. Maybe there is something in there that can help." Cortana advised as she was mainly curious what the datapad said on it.

John did as he was instructed and activated the datapad.

Private First Class Chips Dubbo

Yeah just got done loading some of the weapons that Commander Keyes told me to stack up on. We are really bringing in some of the big guns to this 'Ark' place. And it's not just us, the squid heads are loading some of their guns too. I'm still not use to these guys being on our side, and neither is everyone else. We just mainly keep to ourselves and pray that we live to see another day. But hey, at least they are shooting at us anymore.

_Still there was one gun that I haven't even seen before until now. I guess those damn squid heads were working on another gun, even though they don't have their Prophets to make their weapons for them now. I heard from a couple of Elites say that it was supposed to be the updated version of the plasma rifle. Who would hav thought, that they would had come up with something better than the plasma rifle? _

I guess they are calling the gun a storm rifle, kind of suits it because the gun is pretty slick looking. Me and a few of the guys want to go shoot it, but Sargent Johnson said that if we even touched the trigger on the gun, that he would let us go a round with a Hunter with us armed with only a rubber band. Would the Hunter even feel the rubber band? Apparently, the gun was a prototype and was the only one aboard the Dawn. Some of the Grunts said it was for when all else fails. I don't blame them, damn Brutes are really pushing us after New Mombasa. So the Storm Rifle was moved to a special container in the armory.

Well I better get ready, a lot of us have to help Chief push our way into the Ark's Cartographer. Thank god, I get a Warthog with a gauss cannon on it this time.

End Entry

Once Chief read over the datapad's entry, he let go of the datapad, where it floated in the armory once more.

"We should find this Storm Rifle. Since no one else is using it, we should give it a few proper test runs." Cortana said in a sly voice, where she hinted on what to test the new Covenant weapon on.

"Agreed." Master Chief said in monotone.

"I will look through the Dawn's databanks to see what I can dig up on this new gun."

The Spartan scanned the room, and it only took him a few minutes to spot the case strapped down to a shelf. Chief effortlessly removed the straps, and picked up the case. When he opened the case, the weapon was about to float away, but John was quick to grab it. Chief looked at the storm rifle, and examined it.

The storm rifle was a two handed weapon that was dark blue in color. The gun itself looked like a cross between the Covenant carbine and the plasma repeater, well it mostly looked like the Type-51 Carbine, but with a different stock and a dark blue color.

"Hmm, I did find some interesting data about the Storm Rifle. It is called the Type-55 Advanced Directed Energy Rifle, otherwise known as the Strom Rifle. It is in fact supposed to be the successor to the

Plasma Rifle where it has several modifications such as a modular coil set, a high-mounted cooling shroud, and an extended barrel. All of the changes contribute to a greater overall performance in the field than the Plasma Rifle. As the name hinted, the fully automatic weapon unleashes a 'storm' of projectiles upon firing, which is rapid and deadly at a close to medium range." Cortana informed.

Spartan-117 shifted the weapon around in his arms, to feel weight and handle of the Storm Rifle. The Covenant automatic rifle felt great and light in his hands. Chief noticed that there was a heat display near the back of the gun similar how the ammo count was on the MA5C Assault Rifle, unlike the plasma rifle.

"I don't think the Elites are going to be using it anytime soon. We should bring it with us, it would be a great souvenir." Cortana suggested.

Having felt satisfied with the Covenant weapon, the Spartan supersoldier holstered the storm rifle on the magnetic plates on his back.

The Master Chief had everything packed and was ready to depart from the ship, though he felt like he was leaving something behind. Maybe it was the memories that he had made on the 'Forward Unto Dawn.' It had been commanded by Commander Miranda Keyes, who flew it to the Ark and the reconstructed Halo Installation 04. The warship had also been the Spartan's resting place for who knows how long they had been there. Then a thought occurred to the Spartan.

"How long have we been here?" John-117 asked Cortana.

"A year, John." Cortana said almost sadly.

Master Chief stopped and looked at Cortana with concern.

"Cor..."

"Don't worry about me, John. I... I don't think I have reached Rampancy yet, but I am not completely sure anymore. But right now you are my main concern and I have something to say that may be hard to accept." Cortana replied in a dreary tone.

Cortana acted as if she could take an actual deep breath and sighed.

"Chief, I think we are in an alternate reality."

Spartan-117 was surprised at her accusation. It was something he would have never expected in his entire life despite the drastic things he experienced through his Spartan career.

"What do you mean?"

"When we left the Ark and activated Halo, it must have caused some sort of reaction to the Slipspace portal we opened when the Dawn split in half. The portal was unstable... the possibilities of what could have happened were endless. My guess is that it shot us somewhere else. This is another galaxy or maybe an alternate

reality." Cortana explained, though she herself was unsure of what transpired when they left Installation 00.

The Master Chief did not respond to Cortana, it was just too hard to believe. The concept seemed almost impossible to grasp. He stood there in silence in a state of confusion and some despair. But Cortana continued.

"Well as I scanned their armor and weapons, I picked up that they have a portable computer like device on them called an "omni-tool", which has many functions like a translator and hacking, but what I found on them that were most interesting was an information page called a "Codex". This Codex showed me that this reality is similar, but also greatly different from ours."

Chief was very curious about his trusted A.I's ideas and discoveries.

"How so?"

Cortana began to explain to the confused Spartan about the history of this universe's humanity, like how the humans had a huge technology jump by finding a cache of mass effect technology on Mars from an ancient and advanced race called the 'Protheans' who seemed similar to the Forerunners. How the massive construct called the Citadel was founded and the alien species that occupy it like the Asari, Turians, Salarians, Volus, Drell, Hanar, and so many more. There was also additional information like how the synthetic race the Geth came to be, and past wars like the Rachni war and the Krogan Rebellion. There were even some files on the people they just met.

The man in the dark grey armor with a red mark going down the right arm with the abbreviation N7 was Commander John Shepard. Shepard was the graduate of the Human Systems Alliance N7 special forces program, who fought off a battalion of Batarians by himself during an event called the Skyllian Blitz, became the first human Spectre of the Citadel Council, and saved the Citadel from a rogue Turian Spectre named Saren Arterius and a race of artificial intelligence called the Geth. But one of the most strangest news about Commander Shepard was that he apparently died from some attack on a ship called the Normandy.

As he looked at the codex on Shepard's apparent death, it got Sierra-117 thinking how had he been in front of him earlier and talked to him? But then again, ONI had done some mysterious things like covered up or faked deaths on several occasions for secret activities and operations. Plus Shepard said he was working with Cerberus so that could have been the case, as so far they seemed incredibly similar to ONI from what he read in the Codex.

Though he didn't show it, but the Master Chief was utterly lost. He just couldn't believe that he was in another universe or how to get back to his or even what to do now. He had no idea where he was or where to begin. He would have had an easier time if he was back on High Charity and going through all of the Covenant and the Flood again, than the situation he was in now. The Spartan supersoldier had no orders or missions and now he was lost in a place that nobody could help him with. He was bred for war, but there was nothing for him to fight. He had no idea what to do.

Cortana's voice finally got him to focus once more.

"Chiefâ€¦ I think we should head to that shuttle that the 'dead man' told us about and maybe then we can figure something out."

When John heard Cortana's voice, he slightly perked up. He knew that he wasn't at least alone in the different universe and had his closet friend to help him out through their struggle. So the Spartan and the A.I. started to head to the shuttle that was docked at the 'Forward Unto Dawn'.

Master Chief took one last look at the armory when he was on the other side of the door. He lingered at the view as he knew that he was about to leave the last thing that was the closest to anything of a home from his universe. The memories seeped through the Spartan's brain through all the moments he spent on the Dawn.

"Come on, John. They won't wait forever." Cortana said though her words almost echoed through his mind.

Chief slowly turned and made his way towards the shuttle, still as a confused and lost supersoldier.

****_On the "Forward Unto Dawn" the cryoroom, while the Master Chief was in the armory _****

After being treated with medi-gel and shaken by Shepard, Garrus Vakarian finally woke up.

"Uhâ€¦ what happenâ€¦" Garrus said tiredly as he shook his ached head.

"Well, you got the crap kicked out of you, and so did Mordin and Zaeed." Shepard laughed at one of his best friends.

"Uh?... Wha?... Oh yeah, well there was this giant muscled up green thing that was ten foot tall and it kept on screaming HULK SMASH HULK SMASH! An.. anâ€¦ and there were about a hundred of them, Mordin went down first and then Zaeed, I took out about seventy-five of them by myself while pulling the two to safety and thenâ€¦"

Shepard interrupted his friend that slightly exaggerated.

"We met him after the beating you took."

"Ohâ€¦ well that was kind of embarrassing. Wait! Where is he at? Did you beat him?!" Garrus shouted while he looked around to see if the deadly green giant was nearby.

"No he actually got the drop on us too, it is just we didn't make him mad or anything. We talked to him and said we will give him a ride. He also said that you provoked him about 'attacking vital cargo?' Shepard raised an eyebrow. "Right now he is grabbing a few things from this vessel."

"_The V.I?" _Garrus thought "_or was it a V.I? At the last second it acted a little abnormal for a V.I." _

_"_Seriously Shepard? The people we find are getting stranger by the next. Are you sure we can trust him through the ride?"

"We will keep him under watch, but we could still help him."

"Well as long he doesn't attack me again, then I will live."

"Any idea what the vital cargo could be?" The hero of the Blitz asked.

"I got a hunch, but lets talk about it later when we are back on the Normandy. Can't trust that anything will jump out again." Garrus said as he kept his senses on alert.

"Okay, but you should head to the med-bay and see Dr Chakwas on the 'Normandy.' You might want to get checked for any other injuries, since you do have a huge dent in your armor with the shape of a fist." said Shepard with a little chuckle.

"Yeah I will have to get that dent out. But before I go, there was a sign on the floor that said 'vehicle bay' I want to check that out first. You know, see what I can find in there." Garrus said as he silently hoped that Shepard would let him off the hook.

"Alright, but I am sending Jacob with you just in case you get jumped again." Shepard laughed a bit.

"Thanks, but I don't know if sending Jacob with me will help because if one of those things took three of us down then two won't make it any harder for another." Garrus replied with logic in his words.

Shepard sighed and smirked at the Turian's stubbornness.

"Just go before I change my mind."

Garrus got up successfully, but he failed when he tried not to grunt from the pain. The Turian walked up to Jacob and both went to the room that was known as the vehicle bay.

****_On the bridge of the Normandy SR-2_****

As usual, Joker sat at the cockpit when he piloted the Normandy. When he got bored he would either argue with EDI, check the ship's functions, or browse the extranet for some rather interesting sites, but something out of the ordinary caught Joker's eye from a monitor. What the pilot saw was a seven foot guy clad from head to toe in dark green armor that he had never seen the likes of before. He also carried a huge amount of bags. A normal human shouldn't have been able to carry that much weight, but this guy was carrying them as if they were nothing. So Joker began a message to Shepard.

"Uh Commanderâ€¦ there is a jolly green giant waiting at our door and by jolly I mean scary, any idea why is he here or what I should do?"

"Let him in Joker, we are giving him a ride and he could possibly be a new recruit." Shepard radioed back to Joker

Joker sighed.

"Commander, I know the guys we are picking up are tough, but this guy

could be part of the lost royal family of badasses. He looks like he can take down a heavy mech all by himself with no problem. Are you sure about letting him aboard?"

"After what he had done to Zaeed, Garrus, and Mordin I think he can go toe to toe with a heavy mech and that is why I am going to try to convince him to help us. So open up the hatch and let him through."

"Alright Commander, but if he ends up killing me I am coming back to haunt you!"

Shepard couldn't help to smile at Joker's humor.

"Okay Joker, Shepard out."

****_In the vehicle bay aboard the Forward Unto Dawn_****

Jacob and Garrus looked around in the large and dark vehicle bay. After what they saw from earlier on the unknown ship, they were excited to see what they would find in the vehicle bay. There was an assortment of vehicles that looked human made while there were some they have never seen the likes of. But at the moment, both of them walked through the large vehicle bay, almost in a casual manner.

"I'm surprised that you are up and walking around so soon, after the beating you took." Jacob said, as he tried to make small talk.

The Turian merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Nothing really comes close to the time I cuddled a missile." Garrus said sarcastically, and then gestured to the artificial gaft and cybernetics on the right side of his face.

Jacob chuckled a little.

"Good point."

"But, I will be sore for a few days." Garrus mentioned as his body started to already to ache.

"So how did it go back there? You know, with the guy we just picked up?"

"I... uh... rather not talk about it." Garrus said a little embarrassed as he thought about how the Spartan jumped him.

"That bad, huh?"

"Well, it wasn't fun that was for sure."

"I can imagine that." Jacob replied.

It was then that the Turian spotted something from the corner of his eye. Garrus then turned to look at a very strange vehicle that did not look to be human made.

"Are you sure that this ship belonged to humans?" Garrus asked.

Jacob turned to where had Turian looked, and what he saw rather surprised him as well.

"Woah." The Cerberus operative simply said, in awe.

The two walked up to the abnormal vehicle and examined it. The vehicle was dark purple, had a curved bulbous front and one seat on it. There were two wings near the front, and ahead of the wings, were two square objects that looked like some sort of weapons.

"Any idea what it is?" Garrus asked as had no clue what the thing really was.

"I don't know, it definitely doesn't look it was made by humans." Jacob said through careful observation.

"I don't think there is any species that made a vehicle like this." Garrus answered in disbelief.

A thought then occurred to Jacob. It was a crazy thought, but it seemed rational on how to learn about the vehicle. He walked up to the vehicle and brushed his hand on it, and felt that the machine had a cool sleek surface.

"Hey...uh... do you think I should get in it?"

Garrus shifted a little, unsure about Jacob Taylor's idea.

"If we knew a little more about it, then I would say go for it. But since we know next to nothing about it, I wouldn't." Garrus suggested as he somehow knew that he was going to get a lot more bruises at the end of the day.

"Yeah, good idea." Jacob complemented.

The Cerberus operative stepped back from the dark purple machine and looked a bit farther in the vehicle bay. It wasn't long before Jacob Taylor's eyes settled upon a large vehicle that looked similar to a military tank from the twenith century.

"Now there's something that looks a little more familiar." Jacob said with a little excitement as he looked at something that looked more human made.

Both Garrus and Jacob strolled over to the large grey tank. The tank was very large, maybe around thirty or thirty-three feet in length. It was colored in a light shade of gray, with one white streak on the right tread of the tank. And unlike the older versions of tanks, there were four treads on the sides of the tanks where the wheels were, most likely for easier means of travels on multiple terrain types. There also seemed to be a machine gun turret in the middle of the tank for a second gunner. The cannon was not on the front like other tanks of back then. Instead it was mounted on the back. With the turret hanging over the vehicle and the treads extended outwards, it almost looked like a Scorpion.

Jacob blew a sweet whistle when he stared in awe at the war tank.

"Man, look at this. This looks the tougher version of the tanks from way back." Mr Taylor then examined the long cannon on the war machine. "I bet this thing is packin some real firepower. Wouldn't mind taking it for a spin."

"This thing does look tough, but I think I prefer the Mako. The Mako looks a lot faster and maneuverable. I may had a lot of terrifying times in the Mako with Shepard behind the wheel, but it got the job done." Garrus said with a shudder and a shiver as he recalled all of the crazy stunts and driving Shepard did in the M35 Mako.

"I don't know, I mean look at all the armor on the this thing. And the turret seems to turn all the way around. This tank looks like it can take and dish out some serious damage." Jacob replied still in awe with the tank

Garrus then chuckled.

"Good thing Wrex isn't here to see this. I'm sure we would all be blown to a crater by now." Garrus said as he remembered his old deviously perceptive Krogan teammate from when they chased Saren.

When Jacob finally tore his eyes from the tank, he decided to look around more in the vehicle bay. It didn't take long for Jacob to spot a vehicle that had four wheels, was painted army green, had a huge turret on the back of it, and a painted-on logo: UNSC.

"Wow look at this thing." Jacob Taylor said as he admired the strange, but interesting vehicle.

"Looks kind of primitive with wheels on it and no hovering abilities. Kind of reminds me of a smaller Mako." Garrus said as he walked over to it.

Jacob got by the driver's side and examined the inside of it and then he found something interesting.

"It says in here that it's called a 'Warthog'."

Garrus would have raised an eyebrow if he had one. "You mean the pig like animal on your home planet Earth, why call it that? If anything it looks like that feline animal on your planet uh what is it calledâ€¦ Oh! A puma!"

"What?! How does it look like a puma! This thing has tusks on the front of it, what other animal do you know has tusks!" Jacob turned and said with a loud and surprised voice.

Garrus thought about Mr. Taylor's response and dug deep in his brain on what he barely knew of Earth's animals that had tusks.

"Well there are those other two animals from your planet the Elephant and the Walrus, I don't see why they don't call it one of those. Actually this thing looks more like a Varren, so why not call it a Varren?"

"Those are stupid names for a jeep!" Jacob coughed.

"You know what? Not only do I have to be checked for bruises, but

arguing with you is giving me a splitting headache. I'm heading to the med-bay." Garrus said as he made his way back to the Normandy.

****_Few Hours later back on the Normandy SR-2_****

After a couple of hours that were spent on the ship wreckage, Shepard gave the call sign that it was time to leave. The team gathered at the Cerberus Kodiak shuttle and shared what they had scavenged. They didn't have much, just clothes and some metal material, since most of the vital doors were locked such as the Armory, Medical Bay, Engineering, and a few others. There were a few interesting finds, such as a few datapads, but there wasn't much to get from them besides some strange entries.

Everyone was bewildered about their recent find. How there was a ship that did not run on eezo and was torn in exactly half, full of items that hinted of another human group or possibly a military government called the UNSC and something else called the Covenant stumped them all. Then there was the lone survivor clad in dark green armor that was apparently called a Spartan and was in fact human. No one knew what to make of it, but what they did know that they would be able to discuss it on the Normandy with their new passenger.

It was a short ride to the hangar of the Normandy in the Kodiak shuttle, but when the shuttle descended into the hangar they saw a unusual sight. The Spartan was in the hangar with large amount of giant bags and backpacks on him. The Spartan was armed with what looked like curved handle bars on his sides and another gun on his back that looked completely foreign to all of them. He quietly stood as still as a statue, like if he had been waiting on them in the hangar.

Everyone stared in an awkward silence at the Spartan that almost seemed frozen in place. The awkward moment seemed like it lasted forever until Shepard thankfully broke it. Shepard turned and looked at Garrus, Mordin, and Zaeed.

"Why don't you three head to the medical bay. Dr Chakwas should be able to patch all of you up." Commander Shepard suggested, all the while he tried to lighten the tense mood.

"Are you sure, Shepard? This guy packs a punch." Garrus asked, concerned for his friend's safety.

"Kicks pretty hard too." Zaeed added in as he felt the large bruises that were on his chest under his armor.

"Recommend extreme caution." Mordin said as well in his usual rapid tone.

"We got it covered. Just get up to the medical bay." Shepard finished with a small smile tugged at his face.

"About God damn time." Zaeed complained as he, Garrus, and Mordin all slightly limped out of the Kodiak shuttle.

They walked past the Spartan and headed to the elevator, while Shepard, Jacob, and Miranda stayed.

Master Chief watched at how the three walked to the elevator, but stopped when Shepard, the woman, and the African American male walked up to him. Chief then kept his focus on the trio in front of him.

The former Spectre looked up at the Spartan, only to have the Spartan look back at him and saw his golden reflection in the visor again. The Spartan had such a robotic look and emotion, it was like if he was staring at a Geth Prime in the glowing blue eye. When he looked through the Spartan's gold visor, he noticed Miranda's reflection and saw the look that she gave the Master Chief. Shepard knew the look that Miranda gave him, she no doubt had her eyes on the bags he carried, It was easily predictable that Miranda would try to get a hold of the equipment and technology that the Spartan had on him, and a gesture that would surely provoke the Master Chief. The Blitz hero knew he would have to deal with the issue soon, before a fight would start.

"Looks like you brought enough weapons for a war." Shepard smiled, but the Spartan just stared, "You can take everything and put it in the meeting room so we can have a private discussion. It is on the second floor, the middle door behind the elevator."

The Chief simply nodded, picked up his bags and headed to the meeting room. Shepard once again saw that Miranda still had her icy blue eyes on the strange soldier.

"Don't try anything Miranda, whatever he has belongs to him."

"Commander," Miranda stated, "The Spartan is not to be trusted aboard this vessel, and someone will have to keep an eye on him." Miranda did not reveal the whole truth in her plans.

The Cerberus officer then made her own way to the elevator to follow her own agenda.

"Commander, I think we both know that Miranda has more ideas than we know of," Jacob added in.

Shepard sighed and walked off to the elevator to attend the meeting room to talk with the Spartan.

****_Meeting/Comm Room on the Normandy SR-2 _****

Commander Shepard and John-117 were in the meeting/comm room just staring each other down, both waiting for either one of them to say the first word. The former Spectre knew it was a losing battle, as from what Shepard learned earlier that the Spartan waited on him and his team in the hangar the entire time they salvage. Plus the Spartan didn't show any emotions, he could actually give the Elcor a run for their credits. Shepard exhaled and started the conversation.

"Where are you from?"

"UNSC controlled space in the year 2552."

"2552?"_ thought Shepard, with his eyebrows raised in surprise "_Is this guy from the future? It might explain why his ship doesn't have eezo. But how did he get here in the past?"_

"You should know that the current Earth date is 2185, and what is this UNSC? I am a military man and I have never heard of it?"

"It might be a hard truth to swallow, but I think we should tell him about our 'theory'. Just repeat after me." Cortana said within the MJOLNIR armor where only Master Chief could hear.

"The United Nations Space Command, formed in the year 2163, it served as the military branch from where I am from. I am currently browsing your extranet databases, and codex and I believe I have found an answer to many of your questions." said the Chief, though he actually repeated from what Cortana told him.

"And what is that?" replied the Commander while raising an eyebrow at this excuse.

"I believe I am from an alternate universe."

After the Citadel hero heard the news, his facial expression changed from surprised raised eyebrows to a look of disbelief.

"Well, that is a new one, but as crazy as it seems it kind of explains why you don't need eezo for your ships or why you haven't heard of some of our organizations or why we haven't heard of yours. Is there any proof you can show me?" Shepard asked of what he thought might be a crazy lethal person.

Thankfully, Cortana had prepared for this. His MJOLNIR armor had extensive data logs of all of his past missions and experiences, and she could get access to these whenever she wanted. Of course she edited the videos to where they cut out classified information such as herself and the Halos.

"I have video logs stored within my armor. If you would allow me to use some sort of video projector, I can show you.

"By all means, whatever is necessary to show me that you are honest." Shepard replied, as he held out his hand out as if he was welcoming someone in his home. The Chief placed his hand upon the controls, and the holo-projector came to life.

PLAY VIDEO LOG (2552 Cairo Station)

_Master Chief sprinted through several halls at an amazing speed. The metallic structure in the rooms and halls greatly emphasized that wherever Chief was, seemed to be military in design. _

_The Spartan ran inside a room where it had eleven strange creatures inside. Eight of them were stubby little beings that had inhaler objects and tanks on the back of them and some of them were holding green pistol like weapons or curb shape object with purple needles sticking out of it. _

The other creatures were eight foot with four mandibles on their mouth, dark skinned and had muscles that would make some bodybuilders jealous. Two of them wore blue armor that covered the chest, arms, knees, feet, waist, and head. The other creature's armor was red and all three had weapons that look similar to the green pistol, but they were glowing blue and bigger in size.

_The Spartan was armed with SMG's in each hand. Chief raised his dual weapons and held down both triggers, which released a hail of bullets on one of the taller creatures in blue armor. The gunfire flew in the direction of the lizard like alien, but they only met a blue energy field around the alien. The bullets continued to slam into what Shepard assumed was an energy shield, until the shields flashed and disappeared. The split chinned creature roared in anger, while the other aliens shot their own respective weapons at the Spartan. The energy weapons fired what looked greatly similar to concentrated plasma. It splashed onto Chief's own energy shields, doing a great deal of damage. _

Within a moments notice, the Spartan dove for cover behind a metallic rail. The aliens continued to fire their plasma weapons at the Master Chief, but they only hit the Spartan's cover. Chief looked at his HUD and saw that his energy shields were already down to forty-five percent. Then Chief dropped one SMG and threw a frag grenade at the aliens. The aliens must have seen the bomb land at their feet, as they let out screams before the explosions. When the weapon exploded, it took out six short creatures and the one tall shieldless split lipped alien.

_ Chief then ran up to the red armored mandible alien much to the mandible creature's surprise, he picked it up with his left arm by the shoulder. Chief then brought his SMG to the lizard like warrior's stomach and held down the trigger, which shot it continuously in the belly until the gun clicked. Chief kicked the dead enemy's body at the last blue armored creature and threw a plasma grenade at the fallen squid faced alien. It exploded in a bright blue explosion, which killed the last mandible creature there. _

_Master Chief then saw the last two small creatures aim at the Spartan from his left side and the right. John then picked up the stubby alien on his left with an arm and the creature on his right with the other arm and brought both creatures in the air. He slammed both of their heads together, caving their skulls under his strength. Chief then sprinted to the spiked dark blue object and placed his hand on it, which caused a light to blink on the strange contraption.

_

_Sierra-117 spoke to what seemed like nobody and said, _

_"Sir, permission to leave the Station." _

"For what purpose Master Chief?" An elderly but authoritative voice said over a radio. Unknown to Shepard that the elderly voice belonged to Lord Hood.

"To give the Covenant back their bomb."

"Permission granted."

_Shepard watched in disbelief, as he saw the Spartan drag the spiked dark blue weapon off the deck and into an elevator. Shepard was confused, until he saw Master Chief drag the bomb to what was the air-lock. Chief pressed a button, which opened the doors to the air lock, where the vacuum of space sucked everything into the cold depths of space in the midst of a large space battle over Earth. The bomb flew out of the station, as did Chief. The Spartan latched onto

one of the many spikes on the dangerous explosive and glided through a huge space battle, avoiding any incoming blasts._

Commander Shepard was utterly shocked at where the Spartan and the bomb were headed to in the space battle. The Spartan glided towards the biggest ship that Shepard has ever seen. The ship was silver in color and bulbous in appearance, but the sheer size of the ship was what really grabbed the ex-Spectre's attention. The ship easily dwarfed the Asari dreadnought, the Destiny Ascension, several times over, and that was the largest ship in the Citadel's navy. The Commander couldn't help but to think that ship was rather majestic looking, and on the side that the Spartan had to be crazy to take the ship head on.

_The large ship fired off a bright white, pinks purple beam at the Spartan, but thankfully it missed small target. A frigate ship, that looked greatly similar to the torn ship where they found the supersoldier, flew between the Spartan with the bomb and the bulbous ship. The grey bulky vessel shielded the Spartan from another plasma beam, but the frigate burst into flames. Chief then entered the large silver ship, while he still held onto the bomb. Chief told the Commander that the warship was called a Covenant assault carrier. With the bomb, Chief slowly drifted to some sort of power core and activated the bomb. He launched himself off the explosive, which detonated soon afterwards. Chief drifted into the space battle over Earth once more. _

_Soon the giant ship exploded into blinding blue flames and knocked the Spartan on another frigate, with bold white letters written on the side that said "In Amber Clan". _

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Fast Forward...

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_2552 (Crow's Nest, Africa) _

Shepard watched at how the video fast forwarded to a different event and location. Shepard's mouth almost dropped when he saw the scene that the Spartan was at on the video... Africa, that meant he was on Earth. Shepard saw through Master Chief's point of view that he was on some sort of flight deck in an old fashioned human military base that looked to be built in the twentieth century.

_Some more footage played that showed the Master Chief on other missions even some fighting alongside of one of the giant four mandible creatures in silver armor. _

End Record

The Commander stood there thinking about what he saw. Shepard did not expect to see a different hostile alien organization, a different human race, even a different Earth, on the videos that he just watched. The humans looked so similar to the humans of his era, and the Earth looked almost like his Earth, but even then there were many differences. His Earth was filled with buildings and skyscrapers, full of life. But the Spartan's Earth looked war torn from the intense battles with the alien organization. The Africa on Chief's

Earth looked almost wiped out. He had gained a whole new outlook on the Spartan.

"He has been through so much and lost so many people. He keeps on fighting, but now he has nothing to fight, well maybe I can give him something to fight." Shepard had now wanted to know what so many other people wanted to know, who was the man behind the helmet? He had to look him in the eyes so he could trust the guy.

"There's another thing I want to ask you before I can trust you more," said the ex-Spectre. He had said these words quite nervously, but was excellent in hiding the emotion. "I want to see your face."

At first the Spartan did not respond or even move, his helmet pointed directly at the Commander's face. Finally, after what seemed to be hours, the Chief placed his hands upon his helmet, gave it a twist, and then a hiss was heard. Master Chief removed the Mark VI MJLONIR helmet.

"_Whoa! That is a little unexpected" _thought a surprised Shepard. The Spartan's face was ghostly pale and muscular, but also average looking with brown hair and eyes, with some scars on his face. His eyes were hard, revealing no emotion but full of depth and mystery. He may have been average looking, but he could definitely grab a girl's attention.

"Are you satisfied?" asked the helmetless soldier with his gravelly voice.

The Commander simply nodded and the Chief quickly put his helmet back on. Shepard knew that this was the moment to try to recruit the super soldier to fight against the Collectors.

"With your war over, what will you do now? We can try to find you a way back home, but it may take awhile," stated the hero of the Blitz.

The Master Chief shrugged his shoulders.

"You said that a Spartan's goal was to protect humanity at any cost, right?" The Spartan nodded at this. "Then continue that here, in our universe. Human colonies are being abducted by a race called the 'Collectors'. My team and I are going to stop them, but we could use your help. So will you help us in the good fight, the fight for humanity once more?" Shepard let his hand stretch out.

"This man was a soldier to the core and he needed to fight." Shepard thought with confidence.

"This isn't my universe, but I had promised to help humanity at any and all cost." There was a brief pause before John-117 finished with, "I'll do it." replied the Spartan as he grasped the hand of the other galactic savior.

"Thanks Chief. I'm glad you are up for this, but we will still try to find you back to your home. Now that this is done, we need to find you a place aboard the ship." Shepard said with a smile, glad that he was able to recruit the Spartan.

"EDI we need to find our new member a room. Are there any open?"

EDI's form popped up on a pedestal

"The room that seems big enough for our new arrival's equipment is the cargo room."

"Is there any other room available that could fit or maybe we can put his stuff in the armory?" Shepard asked.

"The cargo bay will work." Chief replied.

"So I've got to ask for the safety of everyone on my ship, why bring all the weapons and the other strange technology?"

"I needed to bring all of my equipment with me, because some of it has vital information from where I come from. A few of my weapons can also be quite effective here." The Spartan answered truthfully.

The Commander then answered, "Sounds reasonable. EDI plot a course for the 'Purgatory.' We got to recruit a convict."

****Finally this chapter was a long one and now it is time to show what the Chief can do against the Blue Suns and I got a lot of cool combat scenes coming up REVIEW!****

4. Chapter 4

****Here is the rewritten version of chapter 4.****

****Thank you everyone for the positive reviews and advice ****

****If anyone is wondering why I didn't get Chief reveal a lot of information is because he wouldn't want to reveal everything to someone on the first meeting, they will have to work to know John's name.****

****Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware. Enjoy the chapter****

****Shepard is male, Paragon, Vanguard.****

Chapter 4: It's Easier Getting In Than Out

****_Normandy SR-2 Captain Quarters _****

Commander Shepard was deep in thought over the mission that was about to commence. He thought he would bring the Spartan because if he brought him it would be a win-win situation. On one hand, he would get a chance to see the green armored giant in action. Plus, if the biotic was as dangerous as he had heard and reacted violently, then the Spartan should definitely help contain the convict.

On the other hand, if the Master Chief betrayed him, then at least he could try to lock him in the prison ship they would soon be on.

"_It wouldn't hurt to bring a little extra backup either."_ The

former Spectre thought to himself as he didn't completely trust the Spartan yet. He may have seen videos from Chief's universe, but the story was still pretty farfetched.

The crew members were going to be Garrus Vakarian and Miranda Lawson. He was bringing Garrus for he could trust him with any situation, and was a true friend. Conversely, he couldn't leave Miranda alone or she might confiscate Master Chief's unknown equipment. The ex-Spectre also hoped that after they recruit the convict, he could try get Master Chief to open up more, after all nobody bonds more than soldiers once they have been in combat together.

So far, Shepard was able to deduce that Chief was a quiet stoic person. But he also figured out that the Spartan was a military man to the core.

"_He probably understands military language as clear as natural English. It might create a familiar background if I be more professional with him." _Shepard thought to himself.

"Commander," said Joker through the intercom. "We are closing in on Purgatory. Whose going on a field trip today?"

"Tell Garrus, Miranda, and Chief to get ready for some action. Get the shuttle warmed up too."

"Bringing extra firepower, Commander?"

"Yeah, better safe than sorry."

"Hey works for me. That's three less hard asses on board. I finally might get a chance to relax on here without Miranda giving me the Cerberus death stare." Joker said with sarcasm.

"Just get to it, Joker." Shepard said with a smirk.

"On it, Commander. Maybe next time you can take IT with you." The helmsman emphasised on the word it.

"I heard that, Mr Moreau." EDI's feminine voiced also sounded over the intercom.

"Aw dammit." Joker swore at the A.I that pestered him to no end, before he shut off the communication.

Shepard chuckled as suited up in his N7 armor. Once he was strapped into his armor he walked to the elevator to meet up with the rest of the squad.

****_Normandy SR-2 Cargo Hold_****

The Master Chief had made the cargo bay his own little armory slash living quarters. He sat his guns on the tables and crates, even stacked some against wall.

The Chief also brought down the foreign mass accelerator guns to dismantle and put back together. Maybe he could learn enough about them to practice shooting them. One of the crew members, a Jacob Taylor, was kind enough to show what the guns were called and how they operated. The Cerberus operative even lent him a few of their

weapons.

It wasn't long before they settled in the cargo bay, Cortana informed the Spartan that there were listening devices all over the room. With help from his trusted A.I. companion, John destroyed every single bug in the room. When he finished off the last one he could have sworn he heard a feminine yell from another floor of the ship.

John busied himself with assembling and disassembling an assault rifle called an M-8 Avenger. After a while, Master Chief started to pick up on a few things from the weapon. It used ammo known as "thermal clips." It was double-barreled with a built-in scope. It could be fired in short bursts or on full-auto, though the Chief suspected that it did less damage than the rifles he was accustomed to. He was interrupted when the voice of a human male blared on the intercom in the cargo bay.

"Uh, Chief? We're going to a prison ship called the Purgatory to recruit someone, and the Commander says you're going with him if there are any problems. Get prepped to board the shuttle." The helmsman Joker said in a rather nervous tone.

"Acknowledged." John replied quickly.

"Well, it looks like they need you already big guy." Cortana chimed in.

Master Chief got up from his seat and picked up two of every grenade from his private collection, and a bubble shield. Now for weapons Chief attached two plasma rifles to his sides, a Covenant carbine placed on the magnetic plates on his back, and a plasma repeater in his armored arms. The Spartan II then proceeded to the elevator.

"Hmmâ€¦ your first mission is going to a prison with people you just met. Am I the only one that is worried?" Cortana spoke to her human companion.

John stepped into the elevator and turned around.

"Yep." Chief simply said as the elevator door closed.

"After going through their codex it said that this Purgatory was originally an 'ark ship' designed to carry agricultural animals. During a large scale battle, the Purgatory was later taken over by a mercenary company known as the Blue Suns. It then went under some reconstruction where it was repurposed to hold prisoners. Supposedly they captured so many in their conflicts throughout the galaxy they needed to store them somewhere. When people started to make claims that the ship was used for slaving operations, the Blue Suns turned a public relations nightmare into a regular income source. Sounds like a friendly neighborhood." Cortana explained in great detail about the prison ship.

"What about the ship's defenses?" The super soldier asked.

"On the inside, it's your typical prison with security and guards. On the outside it's minimally armed with GARDIAN turrets."

"GARDIAN?"

" 'General Area Defense Integration Anti-spacecraft Network.' Anti-missile and anti-fighter guns under V.I. control. But the Blue Suns seem to mainly rely on their own personal army of fighters to prevent any jailbreaks or incoming attacks. Shouldn't be too much of a problem, as long as we can trust this Joker pilot to do his job."

The elevator doors soon opened to reveal Commander Shepard in his N7 armor, already in the hangar. The former Spectre bore a smirk on his face.

"Nice of you to join us, Master Chief. Are you prepped for the mission?"

"Affirmative, Commander." John-117 nodded.

"Good to hear, Spartan. Follow me, I will show you to the shuttle."

Both the super soldier and the hero of the Blitz started their walk towards the Kodiak shuttle in the hangar. During the walk, Shepard thought it would be a decent moment to explain the mission to the Master Chief.

"Our location is a holding vessel by the name of 'Purgatory'. The objective is to subdue and retrieve a prisoner. The target is known as Subject Zero or Jack, a dangerously high level biotic. Approach is to be made with extreme caution."

Shepard saw that Chief looked at him, but he knew that the Spartan was about to ask; ' why he was going?'

"Cerberus has already paid the funds, so it should be a simple trade. But as unpredictable as Jack is said to be, extra security is being insured. We clear?"

Master Chief simply nodded his head.

In a few seconds, the Spartan spotted the white shuttle that had similar markings to the Cerberus emblem stamped on it. Next to the shuttle was the alien with the cybernetic mouth that he injured when he woke up from cryo-sleep. The Turian tensed up when he saw him, but the alien was able to relax himself.

Beside the Turian was also the Cerberus woman.

As Shepard escorted the Master Chief to the Cerberus Kodiak shuttle, the former Spectre decided that before they go to Purgatory it would be best to introduce the Spartan to the others in the team. He already knew that both Garrus and Miranda had already met the man in dark green armor, but that was when he was still an unexpected encounter.

Strangely enough Garrus almost looked rather excited to see Chief. When Garrus first met the Spartan it was not on happy terms. The Turian was knocked aside and unconscious by the super soldier. And if Shepard knew his friend well enough, then Garrus was itching to see what Master Chief could do to the enemy and not him.

There was no doubt in his mind that Miranda's own first encounter with the man was anything, but cordial though unlike Garrus she did not get knocked around.

However the sooner they smoothed things over the better in his mind and also he still had to rely on his backup plan if things went sour when they got Jack. They were going to be fighting side by side so they might as well try and get along with one another and try to bury the hatchet, preferably NOT in each other's backs.

"Might as well get the introductions over with." _Shepard thought to himself.

"Chief, before we go on this mission, you will need to meet the others working with us on this op."

"Understood sir."

Even if it was an automatic response in his mind, Shepard took the response in stride and introduced Garrus.

"This is Garrus Vakarian, former C-Sec Detective and a good friend of mine. He helped me deal with the rogue Spectre Saren two years back and is one the best snipers I have worked with."

John studied the Turian and managed to calm himself as he had noticed some resemblance to the Sangheili he worked against, and with. He was still uneasy working with aliens though he would be able to put aside his differences for the time being. And from what he was able to read on Shepard and his own team, Garrus was a trust worthy sort, a bit of a rebel but had his gut and heart in the right place. He could tell that Shepard's claim of Garrus being a good sniper was accurate due to the fact that Garrus favored the sniper rifle he had with him, though he wondered if such a long range weapon was wise to use in the confined space of a prison. Still he was going to reserve judgment for now and he did notice one of the assault rifles on the Turian's back so he clearly had weapons training in other fields.

Garrus looked the Spartan over and saw his reflection on the visor and felt a bit of a shiver run up his spine, and for good reason. He recalled how the Spartan manhandled him, Zaeed and Mordin and was happy that at least for now he was not going to fight this guy. Still he trusted Shepard's judgement and decided to at least play ball with the Spartan.

"You pack a hell of a punch, as long as you're focusing on the bad guys and not me then we're good." Garrus said as he tired to be the bigger man, well figuratively.

John gave a nod at that and then Shepard spoke.

"And this is..."

Shepard was hoping that Miranda would at least let him do the introductions, but he felt that it was not going to end the way he hoped. And his gut was right on the money as Miranda spoke with her usual air of authority.

"Miranda Lawson, Cerberus officer, and second in command of this

operation against the Collectors."

Miranda was not going to give ground on this matter as she wanted to show that she was more than able to hold her own in anything, even her own introductions. She had to admit that the man before her was...different, and it had little to do with his size or height, but other matters as well. She eyed at his armor and also his gear as she was very much hoping to find out what made them all tick, as they were unlike anything she had seen before. Nothing in the Alliance, Cerberus, or in the Terminus Systems had tech like that on the man and she was hoping to learn all that she could.

She was unaware that in the seconds she was sizing John up, he was doing the same to her as well. He could tell that she was the kind who favored precision, light, and rapid firepower judging from the still folded Heavy Pistol and SMG she had on her hips. She also appeared to be reliant on agility, speed, and flexibility in hand to hand fighting if her form was any indication. He also guessed that the looks and the suit were used to distract people and make them think her harmless and merely a beautiful woman. He could tell by the way she moved and looked that she was well trained and more than aware of her abilities and she had a confidence about her that spoke of experience and authority, no doubt giving her a reputation among the crew similar to some female officers in the UNSC he had dealt with in the past minus the late Miranda Keyes and ODS Lieutenant Melissa McKay.

All the same though, John was going to be wary; he had already seen her eyeing the gear he had on him and his armor when she thought he did not notice... so no sense not watching himself.

Cortana would have commented now, but she kept silent for the time being. That was actually a good thing in his mind as he finally spoke.

"Ma'am."

****During the ride to the Purgatory in the Kodiak Shuttle ****

The trip in the shuttle was relatively quiet, something that normally did not happen with the kind of mission they were undertaking. The silence was very different, almost awkward. Shepard and Miranda sat down on the seats, while Garrus and Master Chief hung on the rails inside the shuttle with his weapons already with him.

Normally this was the time that the team would go over the operation parameters of the mission, inspect their weapons for errors, check for their supply of thermal clips to see if they had enough, just the regular things a strike team would normally do. But this time there was nothing more than a deep unnerving silence as each was swept away by the tumultuous sea of their own thoughts.

This however was only for the three members of the Normandy crew as John was busy running through the details in his head on Purgatory with Cortana in a strong conversation that was muted from the others.

Garrus gave the Spartan a slight glance and recalled how easily this guy had taken him out once more. He was sure that Shepard brought the guy here to see how he would do in a fire fight, he could have told

Shepard not to bother since he had seen him up close but he chose not to. The reason was that had it been a serious fight to the death, he seriously doubted that he would still be in the land of the living. He was actually eager to see just how this armored warrior handled himself in a real no holds barred fight, and judging from the still present ding on his armor, he had a feeling that he was not going to be the least bit disappointed.

Shepard was likewise reviewing his options when it concerned the Chief, as much as he wanted the guy to stay as part of the team he had to take a lot of things into account. He still was not sure how skilled the Spartan was despite seeing the records, so this was a good chance. He also hoped that this would be the chance to see if the Chief was reliable and if he proved not to be one, then he would make the move to leave him in the prison ship. It was not something he personally wanted to do, but he had to be ready to make that choice and at least he could count on both Garrus and Miranda to help him.

As for Miranda Lawson, her train of thought was more focused on getting as much data as she could about the Spartan. Even with the information that she had already gained, she knew that she needed more facts. The Cerberus officer therefore directed her full attention to the Master Chief and began to think on her plans to get the data she needed. The female scanned the Spartan with her blue eyes from head to toe, her main focus of her silent scrutiny being the Chief's armor and also his weapons.

The guns were completely foreign to her both in design and function, they were definitely alien in origin and therefore she had no idea just how they worked and what powered them. But there was no doubt in her mind that if the Spartan carried them over the weapons that he had which possessed more human design characteristics, then they had features that could never be seen anywhere else. Miranda knew she had to get her hands on them and send them to the Illusive Man for an analysis on all aspects, ranging from firing mechanisms, construction materials, power source, ammunition and the like. All of this could very well give humanity an advantage in the many challenges that Cerberus was willing to face that the Alliance would either deny or ignore.

The kidnapping of the humans in the Terminus Systems being the most obvious.

"Those are some unusual weapons you have." Miranda said as she looked at the Plasma Repeater and the other devices with genuine interest in her voice.

The Spartan did not reply to that, but she was not deterred easily as she decided to try another approach before they could get to Purgatory. She normally did not take a lot of interest in one person, not even Shepard got that much interest as she had been working with him for nigh on two years to bring him back. But the Spartan was a totally different matter, the way they found him and what they had learned about him made him VERY interesting to her.

All in all, he was an anomaly to her as well as possibly a gold mine of information, and a powerful ally. And being a high ranking officer for Cerberus as well as her insatiable desire to learn and uncover mysteries and motives, she needed to know everything about everyone.

And right now... he was number one in the list of things she needed to learn and solve.

"What kind of weapons do you have with you there? They obviously don't look the least bit human in nature and design."

John was already familiar with her interest, namely in his choice of weapons and he could understand just why she was interested in them as well as his MJOLNIR Armor. When the war broke out between the UNSC and the Covenant, the scientists in the UNSC worked their brain cells to exhaustion to crack the tech the Covenant had, namely their plasma weapons. They did have an understanding of the principles of beam technology but they did not dedicate as much resources to the area due to the Insurrection going on. And here before them was living proof that infantry grade beam weapons were possible. One of the reasons they never developed their own plasma weapons was the Covenant had a nasty habit of placing tracking devices in their weapons.

This was always the bane of recovering Covenant tech since they had to do exhaustive scans to remove any tracking devices, before the salvaged tech was taken away for study. And if not done, then the UNSC recovery teams and research sites would usually have less than friendly non human visitors blowing down their door.

At the moment, he was not all that sure with the idea of allowing Miranda to learn anything about the Covenant weapons. He still had no idea just who this woman was, her loyalties and the organization she was part of...this Cerberus. And her actions and attitude prior to their trip to Purgatory told him that she was not someone he should open up to unless he could learn more. Cortana likewise agreed and told him in private NOT to be too open just yet. If she was trying to fish for information, she would have to do a lot better.

"They don't operate with any tech I've ever seen. May I look at your rifle?" Miranda bristled and asked more bluntly this time.

"Sorry Ma'am but the technology that is used in these weapons is off limits."

Miranda started to get frustrated though she did her best not to show it on her face. It was clear to her that taking the direct approach was not the best way to get what she wanted. Then again, she decided to try a different approach and concluded that if asking directly was not going to work, then asking sweetly might work. She was not sure if it would work, but it was worth a try anyway.

Meanwhile, Shepard and Garrus watched the interaction like spectators at a tennis match. Both exchanged half hidden smiles in a light atmosphere between each other.

However, that plan had to be shelved as the announcement came that they had docked to Purgatory.

****_The Normandy soon docked at the Purgatory._****

Shepard, Garrus, Miranda, and the Master Chief strode toward the entrance of the prison ship to meet up with Warden Kuril; the one responsible for the 'exchange' involving a certain highly unstable biotic.

The group walked up the entrance of the prison and there they were greeted by Blue Sun Turian guard and two other humans. All of them were armored up in the traditional Blue Sun armor.

"Welcome to the... uh...um Pur...ga...tory." The human stammered.

The Blue Sun merc was well prepared to see Commander Shepard despite the rumor of his death, along with Cerberus. But what made him pause in shock was who traveled with Shepard. Behind the former Spectre was a thing that stood seven foot tall, covered from head to toe in dark green armor. His weapons were just as strange, all of which he has never seen the likes of. They seemed to be colorful with strange curves on them that slightly glowed. The Blue Sun almost fell on his backside when he saw his golden reflection in the thing's visor.

The Turian Blue Sun let out a loud sigh.

"Ugh, what he is trying to say is that your package is being prepped and you can claim it shortly. As this a high-security vessel, you'll need to relinquish your weapons before we proceed." Stated the Turian guard who then looked at Master Chief. "Especially yours. I don't even know what you are carrying."

"_That makes two of us." _Miranda thought bitterly.

There was no chance in hell that Master Chief wouldn't let anyone lay a hand on his guns. John-117 was about to deny the guard's orders, but the Commander beat him to it.

"I can't do that." The ex-Spectre replied calmly

"I will ask one more time Shepard, give us your weapons." The guard warned with a hint of anger in his voice.

"My weapons stay with me." Shepard said just as determined to hold his ground.

The guards drew their own guns weapons, as did the Normandy crew.

"Sorry, it has to be that way." said the Turian.

Before any of them could shoot a single bullet, a barefaced Turian walked behind the Blue Suns.

"Everyone stand down! Commander, I'm Warden Kuril, and this is my ship. Your weapons will be returned on the way out. You must realize this is just a standard procedure."

"It's my standard procedure to keep my gun." The Commander rebutted.

Silence filled the hall where Warden and Shepard had a stare down, but soon the Warden caved in.

"Let them proceed. Our facility is more than secure enough to handle four armed guests. We're bringing Jack out of cryo. As soon as the funds clear you can be on your way. If you'll follow me to

Outprocessing for the pickup, Commander."

"Let's go." Shepard simply said as he and his squad mates followed Warden through the prison ship.

"That was close. Good thing, that Shepard guy knows a few things about talking._" _Cortana said in Master Chief's helmet.

The Spartan had a bad feeling in his gut about this "Warden Kuril" and Chief Mendez taught him to always trust his gut,_ it knows you better than anyone else._ Now Chief was well prepared to pull out a plasma rifle when the situation demanded it.

The entrance door opened that lead to a window hallway where everyone could see countless rows of cells with prisoners inside. They also saw some criminals get taken out or put in their cells by mechanical cranes. The way the cranes moved cells, made it seem more like a factory line than a prison.

"Cellblock two. As you can see we keep tight control over the population. Each prisoner's cell is a self-contained modular unit. I've blown a few out the airlocks as an example." Warden informed as the tour kept on going with everyone glancing at the prison.

"Not exactly employer of the year. This guy seems more like a tyrant than a warden. I'd keep an eye on him, Chief." Cortana advised inside his helmet.

John-117 didn't say a word- which the A.I. was quite use to- and followed the group.

"This ship is made up of thirty cell blocks identical to this one. We house thousands of criminals. We can put this place in lockdown on a moment's notice." Warden bragged.

The barefaced Turian stopped and turned around. "Nothing goes wrong here."

"Can you tell me about Jack?" Shepard thought it would be a good time to ask some questions and learn about the convict.

Warden shuffled his fingers against his other hand as if he was nervous or scared. The other Blue Suns stiffened up, scratched their necks, or shuffled nervously as well.

"Cerberus hasn't told you? Jack is the meanest handful of violence and hate I've ever encountered. Dangerous, crazy, and very powerful. You'll see soon enough." Warden warned in a wary and wisp-like voice.

"How did you end up running this ship?" asked the Commander.

The barefaced Turian turned to look out the window to admire his work of containment of prisoners and answer the question at the same time.

"I was in law enforcement on Palaven, and got sick of seeing criminals escape out into the galaxy to carry on with their crimes. Bounty hunters aren't dependable. Eventually I hit upon this idea. Keep criminals in space and the galaxy is a safer place."

"You do this because you think it's necessary?" Garrus said clearly unconvinced.

The Warden turned back to look at the group.

"Every day I see the worst sapient life has to offer. Governments are soft, unwilling to make the hard choices. Someone had to stand up to make the galaxy safe."

Garrus narrowed his eyes at Warden. The former C-Sec officer was quick to not to trust the barefaced Turian. In his culture, a Turian with no markings of any sort that showed their clan, could not be trusted. Garrus belief on the idea was heavily reinforced when he fought some of his toughest battles caused by another barefaced Turian, Saren Arterius.

Garrus nudged Shepard on the shoulder.

"Watch out for Warden. I got a bad feeling about him." Garrus whispered to the Commander.

"Same here, but the sooner we get Jack the sooner we can leave." Shepard whispered back.

Shepard had one more thing to say before they would move on.

"Maintaining a population this size in space can't be cheap."

"We cut corners that governments can't and each prisoner brings in a fee from his homeworld. These individuals are violent, and their home planets pay well to keep them here." Warden Kuril answered.

"What happens if the homeworld doesn't pay?" Miranda Lawson asked with a raised eyebrow.

"We explained that we cannot maintain the prisoner without their help, so we'll be forced to release him back onto his homeworld. At an unspecified time and place." Warden replied with a sly Turian smirk.

"So you scare the homeworlds with prisoners? Like an extortion racket?" Garrus scoffed at the idea.

"You don't have to agree with my methods, but don't question my motives. These are despicable people and I am keeping them locked up." Warden retaliated at the remark.

"Let's get on with this." Shepard said wanting to acquire his package.

"Has there ever been any attempts at an escape?" Miranda wondered if the prison was truly unescapable.

The group kept walking, while looking out of the windows to see many prisoners and guards.

"We're in space-they have nowhere to go, and they know it. But still, we exercise extreme caution for these are dangerous individuals."

Warden answered.

The group looked out of the window to see two prisoners arguing violently. Spotting them, a Batarian prison guard played with his omni-tool and a pillar popped out of the floor. From the top of the pillar shot two blue streams of energy, which encased the prisoners in blue spheres and then separated them to a safe distance.

"We have many ways to control the population." Warden bragged.

The group turned a corner and followed their guide through yet another door.

"I'm going to confirm that the funds from Cerberus are cleared. Outprocessing is straight down this hallway. Just keep going past the interrogation rooms and the Super-max Wing." At this the tour ended and Warden began to leave, but he turned and said.

"I'll catch up with you" Shepard.

Miranda took a curious second glance at Warden Kuril. Something about his whole demeanour aroused her suspicions. In her years working with the higher-ups at Cerberus, she'd run into plenty of shady characters, and she had developed keen senses when it came to spotting deceitful behaviour. Right now those same senses screamed that Warden Kuril was hiding something.

Shepard, Garrus, Miranda, and Master Chief now were heading to the Outprocessing area to unfreeze Jack.

"This was easy, too easy. Something feels completely wrong. Garrus might have been right, Warden Kuril can not be trusted." Shepard thought to himself.

But as they walked they passed by a Blue Sun Turian watching another Turian interrogate a human prisoner with brute force. Everyone stopped and watched in disgust at how the Blue Sun continued to beat the criminal with his bare fist.

"You don't even get good information that way. After a point, victims admit to anything to make the pain stop." Garrus said as he recalled some days when he was a C-Sec officer.

"Interrogation is sometimes... necessary, but this is just pointless cruelty." Miranda voiced her opinion with her hands on her hips.

Again, the Spartan stayed silent, but Shepard wanted the big man to feel like part of the group, so he played the diplomat.

"What do you think Chief?" Shepard ventured.

"I've seen worse." Master Chief simply said. But in truth, the sight of an alien wailing on a human being like that "and nobody doing a thing about it" turned the Chief's blood cold. It reminded him of the pains the Covenant had inflicted upon humanity in his home universe. It didn't help that Turians looked like Elites, either.

This caught the attention of Miss Lawson.

"_So this UNSC must be pretty cruel to their prisoners. __How hard they interrogate a prisoner, usually they train their soldiers even harder just in case they get capturedâ€¦ so this guy must be very tough_."Miranda thought.

The Cerberus officer remembered the organization that the Spartan served when she listened in on the conversation between Shepard and Master Chief through her bugs in the meeting room.

If she only knew that John actually referred to ONI when he said "he saw worse".

The Blitz hero then went up to the Turian guard.

"Can I help you with something?" The Blue Sun asked.

"There is no excuse for beating a prisoner that can't fight back." Shepard said.

"This is a massage compared to what other guy went through." Said the Turian guard with no regret in his words.

Shepard thought he would try a little harder to persuade.

"This degrades you as it does him."

"We have orders." Replied the Blue Sun.

"Are you not important enough to make your own decisions?" The Commander knew just what to say.

The guard stood there deep in thought about what the former Spectre said.

"I admit I sometimes get tired of this. Does this really get us anything useful?" The Turian said more to himself than to Shepard.

"Stop this, for your own sake." Shepard said softly.

The Turian once again thought about the situation.

"Yeah, your right. Call it off, at least for now."

The interrogator stopped beating the prisoner at soon as the guard gave the order. The prisoner crawled away to a corner, as if terrified that he would have to go through that process again.

Feeling slightly vindicated by his own small contribution to ending injustic, Shepard refocussed his attention on the more importanat mission at hand: recruiting Jack.

"Okay, this guy definitely has a way with words. You can learn a thing or two from this guy, caveman." Cortana commented in John's helmet.

Chief didn't say a word, but Cortana wasn't offended as she was quite use to his silent damenor.

Then a prisoner with the numbers 780 on his orange and black jumpsuit, from the cell next to the interrogators called out to the Normandy crew.

"Hey, if you're buying prisoners, can you buy me? Man, I don't care where you take me or what you do to me; it's got to be better than this." The criminal said almost sounding desperate.

"We are here for the biotic prisoner Jack, not you." Miranda scoffed.

The criminal quickly shook his head and his eyes widened.

"Jack? Forget what I just said. I don't want to go nowhere with you." Prisoner 780 replied with fear and then took a couple steps back.

"I thought this ship was a prison, not a market." Shepard said with a raised eyebrow.

"Sometimes people buy cons so they can do some punishing of their own, if you understand. Warden sells us to whoever can pay enough."

"Why were they interrogating that prisoner, does he know something?" asked the Commander.

"That's Bimmy, he offend someone in the shower today. Apparently he killed someone that Warden liked."

"Has anyone ever died through interrogation?" asked Garrus.

"No, Warden can't get money off us. Though when a guard tortures someone they seem to get meaner."

"So what are you in for?" asked Shepard which was a common question in prison.

"I killed a few people, only twenty or so and I blew up that one habitat. Small timed compared to most of the guys around here."

Shepard thought he could try and get some information on their soon to be recruit.

"Tell me more about Jack."

"The worst trouble you ever saw mixed with some... mixed with some crazy and way too much biotic power. That is all I am saying." The criminal said in fear.

"So what is it like here?"

"Bad, and you got to watch out. Damn, but someone is always after your stuff. Your smokes, your clothes, your pride. I haven't taken a shower in three months."

Miranda's perfect features rearranged themselves into a look of disgust, when she heard about the criminal's hygiene. She then walked off with her heels clanking against the floor, where it made the

obivious sign that she was ready to leave and carry on with the mission.

"I better get going" Shepard said after the answers were getting a little strange.

"I wish I could go." said Prisoner 780, hanging his head in shame.

Now the Normandy crew went through another giant white room that looked similar to a cafeteria, except there was a terminal next to the entrance. There were four large tables in the room and in that room was also a technician on a terminal. The technician said to go to the end of the room to get into the Outprocessing room. As the doors slithered closed behind them, an ominous voice echoed through the room over the intercom.

"I'm sorry Shepard, but you're more valuable as a prisoner than a customer. Drop your weapons and proceed to the open cell. You will not be harmed."

"Maybe I can change your mind." Shepard's mind began to race as his peaceful sensibilities urged him to try and solve this problem through use of either words or money.

"Activate systems!" Warden yelled out.

In a moments notice the team got ready for battle as they pulled their weapons and jolted behind the tables. Shepard had his submachine-gun, the M-4 Shuriken and was behind the left desk with Garrus who welded his signature sniper rifle the, M-92 Mantis.

"So much for a civil approach." Shepard said.

"Told you not to trust him." Garrus said with a small smirk.

Miranda and Master Chief rushed behind the right desk. Miranda had her own M-4 shuriken submachine-gun, while Chief pulled out his dual plasma rifles.

Normally Chief would have used the plasma repeater, a two handed weapon, but his military training told him that in the first ambush the enemy sends in a large number of troops to overwhelm the enemy. But the main problem with that logic was that there was only way in, through the door they came. So as soon as the doors open he could kill many enemies really quick with a barrage of plasma fire from the plasma rifles.

"Well Chief, your gut was once again right. Sometimes I think you listen to it more than me. Seven contacts are coming in through that door and two mechanical contacts too." Cortana warned.

Soon the door opened with a familiar hiss. The Normandy team heard the pounding of armored footsteps as the Blue Suns thundered in through the doorway like the beating drums of war. The served the team with a sense of adrenaline and thumping hearts.

A group of seven Blue Suns walked through with their mixed mass accelerator weapons aimed. The Blue Sun group was led by a Batarian legionnaire. The legionnaire had a kinetic energy shield, along with

a M-15 Vindicator rifle. Beside the legionnaire were two Turian Centurions. The two Centurions were also shielded and both carried M-27 Scimitar shotguns. The other four were low ranked Blue Sun humans with avengers in their arms.

The room erupted in a furious symphony of gunfire from the continuous rounds of the Blue Suns to keep the Normandy commandos pinned down. Soon the gunfire ceased when the leader gave the order to stop shooting.

The Batarian legionnaire made certain hand gestures to signal to his team for them to move ahead in the room and get ready for an assault.

"Spread out! Remember, Warden wants Shepard alive, the rest are target practice."

The Blue Suns went ahead of their Batarian leader, as they scanned the room for their enemies.

What the Blue Sun troopers weren't expecting was the sudden reaction of a Spartan-II.

The Master Chief leaped up from his cover and let out a barrage of plasma bolts from his plasma rifles. The plasma rounds ate away the Blue Suns armor as if it was tissue paper. It even took out the Turian centurion's kinetic shields in only a few blows. Soon a Turian centurion and two human Blue Suns went down, their armors, charred, seared, and sizzling from the intense heat.

The rest of the Blue Suns took cover behind some white tables. The Batarian leader hid behind a table on the right side of the room next to a human Blue Sun. While the Turian Centurion ran behind the other table on the left next to the other human.

"What just happened?!" The Batarian demanded in confusion at how his troops went down so fast.

The Batarian was not the only one that in was in shock. Shepard wondered the same thing. However, before he could even register any thought, the explosion of gunfire jarred him out of his head and ripped his attention back to the chaos around him.

"Move out! Take that metal bastard down!" The Batarian legionnaire commanded.

The Blue Suns got out of their cover and started to make their way towards the Normandy commandos position. The humans were going to flank them from the sides while the Turian assaulted in the middle.

"Except_ _the room is too narrow for an effective flank attack." _Shepard saw this fatal strategy as the perfect opportunity to get rid of the enemy.

"Take the..." But the Commander stopped during his sentence when he saw the Spartan jump over the table.

"What are you doing?!" Shepard exclaimed at Master Chief's sudden action.

It was then that Garrus placed his three digit hand on his friend's shoulder.

"Just watch," Garrus said in a reassuring tone, as he knew what was about to happen.

Chief leapt over his table with plasma rifles in both hands. He extended his arms and shot out a few plasma bolts from each weapon as he advanced on the Blue Suns. The bolts slammed into both human guards, burning their armor with blood curling screams. A portion of the Spartan's energy shields were damaged. Chief saw that the Turian centurion had shot at him with his shotgun. The super soldier ran up, and roundhouse kicked the shotgun out of the Blue Sun's hands, leaving a good size dent in the weapon. Chief then smacked the Turian on the head with his plasma rifle, caving in the Blue Sun's skull and smashing its helmet.

"Dammit!" The Batarian swore. His omni-tool then lit up and spoke into it. "Send it in the FENRIS mechs!"

Two white dog like robots with red lights on them, ran in the room, searching for their targets. It was then the mechs spotted Master Chief out in open and moved in for the kill.

"FENRIS mechs! Don't let them get too close or they will eat away your shields!" Garrus warned.

Chief holstered his weapons on his sides and waited for the robotic dogs.

One of the FENRIS mechs jumped on top of the tables and lunged at the dark green armored giant, but its face never collided with the being as it was caught in mid-air by the neck. The Chief then raised the FENRIS up and got his other hand on the waist and turned the robot sideways and brought it down on his knee and ripped it in half. John looked at his handy work and tossed the remains aside.

Miranda and Shepard's jaws dropped at the sight. Not even a Krogan was strong enough to do that and mechs were well reinforced with tough armor. Garrus wasn't all that stunned as he had the bruises to remember the Spartan's abilities.

Chief reached over his back and pulled out his plasma repeater, ready for the next target.

The last FENRIS mech dog ran mindlessly down the middle at the Spartan. The mech dog sprung at Chief, but he successfully stopped it by holding out his leg and brought it down to the ground. The mech struggled under the Master Chief's boot, trying to get free. Chief aimed his plasma repeater at the head of the FENRIS and fired a few rounds, ceasing the robotic dog's squirming.

The Batarian watched in terror at what happened to his small squad and mechs.

"Fuck this!" The legionnaire shouted and ran as fast as his trembling legs could carry him.

John-117 saw that the last Blue Sun was about to make a break for it.

He quickly aimed his Covenant weapon at the Batarian and pulled the trigger for a short burst. The plasma instantly went through the Batarian's kinetic shields, his armor, and into his back.

The legionnaire fell hard to the floor. The Batarian tried to get up, but it was of no use, he was far too wounded. So he tried to crawl away on his elbows.

"I don't get paid enough for this." The Batarian legionnaire muttered with a small trail of blood leaving his mouth. The Blue Sun then heard the heavy metallic footsteps of the one who wiped out his team, walk towards him. With some strain, the legionnaire brought his hand to his ear, and pressed two fingers against his comm unit.

****The Comm Station aboard the Purgatory****

Warden Kuril walked in the communications room, carrying a datapad. The bareface Turian was rather anxious on selling his new prize to the highest bidder. Already he has received several offers to buy the actual living breathing Commander Shepard. Most of the offers were from Batarians, but Warden did not care, as long as he got his money. And from the look of the bids, he was going to get a lot of money.

"I will live like a king." Warden thought to himself with greed.

Warden looked away from his datapad and turned his attention to his two Blue Sun Turian communication officers in the room.

"Has Borvan and his team captured Shepard yet?"

One of the Turians glanced over his shoulder at his commanding officer.

"Well... oh, we are about to find out." The Turian said when one of the many buttons blinked.

When the Turian communications officer pressed the button, he heard something that sent shivers down his spine.

"This is Borvan! Shepard and his team are loose! He brought some sort of invincible metal giant with him! Killed everyone, send reinfor... ahh!"

What came next was a blood curdling scream with some strange noise going off. Afterwards there was some sort of sizzling sound like if something was melting from a hot source.

Warden had a good hunch who the metal giant was as he recalled the Krogan sized human in dark green armor with a gold visor that accompanied Shepard. The bareface Turian eyes widen when he realized that his trophy was not in a cell yet. Warden rushed up to a console and pressed the intercom button.

"Reinforce on processing, Shepard is loose!"

****Back with the Normandy squad ****

Once the Batarian was disposed of Master Chief scanned the room to

ensure that there were no more hostiles. He also looked at the radar on his HUD and saw no more red blimps on it.

"Area is secure," Chief said in his gravelly voice.

Shepard still had his mouth hanging open from seeing the Spartan in action.

"See what I mean?" Garrus said bringing the former Spectre out of his thoughts.

The Commander stood up from his cover with a smirk on his face.

"He is going to be a great help against the Collectors." _Shepard thought with confidence.

Shepard walked up and patted the super soldier on his armored shoulder.

"Nice job, Chief. Remind me to not make you mad." The Blitz hero said as he walked ahead of Master Chief.

Miranda Lawson on the other hand had a more technical analysis on the Spartan's performance.

"He is stronger and faster than the average human. His reflexes were phenomenal. He also seems to have different kind of energy shielding on his armor as the barrier itself was yellow in color and stronger. I need to get a medical record on him and see what else he is hiding under that armor. The Illusive Man will be most interested in my report." _Miranda thought to herself.

Garrus wasn't that surprised as he has already seen what he could do in combat unfortunately he was going against him. "_He must have been holding back when we fought otherwise I would be dead." _

"Let's move out!" Shepard ordered, while he brought out his M-23 Katana shotgun.

"Reinforce on processing, Shepard is loose!" Warden's voice came on the intercom.

"We need to get Jack out of cryo!" Garrus said to Shepard.

The Normandy team proceeded through the halls of the Purgatory, taking out any Blue Suns that stood in their way. Shepard took the lead of the four person group with his shotgun in his arms, cutting down several foes. But with the Master Chief's plasma weapons, killing the Blue Suns and making their way through the prison was cake walk.

Miranda watched at how Chief's plasma guns would tear through the shields in a few shots and melt the armor of the Blue Suns, killing them instantly.

"_I got to get a hold of his technology._" Miranda thought once more.

There was a group of six Turian centurion Blue Suns standing in front of the Outprocessing door, hoping to guard from it from the advancing

commandos. Three Turians were standing up with avenger assault rifles aimed while the other three were on knee aiming their guns as well. All of them were a little nervous for taking on Shepard after hearing how quickly he and his team had advanced through the Purgatory and killed off many Blue Suns. But they still held their ground.

"Keep steady. Wait for him to show up." The head Turian centurion reassured.

Suddenly Commander Shepard came out from the corner at the end of the hall.

"Open fire!" The head Turian shouted.

All six Blue Sun centurions let loose a hail of rounds from their avenger assault rifles.

The former Spectre instantly dove back for cover at the corner of the hallway, with his shields taking most of the damage.

"I count six of them guarding the door out there." Shepard informed while he placed a new thermal clip in his katana shotgun.

It was then, John-117 pulled out a spike grenade and threw it the leading Blue Sun in the middle. The grenade stuck to the Turian trooper, he screamed in pain at how the spikes speared into him. Soon the spike bomb exploded, where it killed the Turian it stuck and the two standing Blue Sun centurions next to him. Spikes shot out from the grenade where they bounced against the ceiling and walls in the hall. The spikes then impaled the three remaining Turian centurions mortally wounding them. The Blue Suns fell to the ground, screaming in agony from their intense pain.

Garrus leaped out from the corner and headshot one of the Turian centurions, where he ceased his suffering.

Miranda came out and put a few rounds into one of the Turians with her heavy pistol. She then threw out a biotic move called Warp at the last Turian Blue Sun. It was then that no more screams filled the hall.

Garrus walked up to the dead bodies of the six Turians and stared at the glowing yellow spikes that protruded from their bodies.

"I don't know what that grenade was, but it seems pretty... brutal." Garrus commented with a hint of disgust.

"Doesn't matter as long as it was effective. The outprocessing should be right behind this door." Miranda said coldly, but she too wondered what the device was that the Master Chief threw.

"Get ready. There might be more on the other side." Shepard pointed out where everyone soon prepped themselves.

The squad opened the door and saw a scientist on a terminal with two human Blue Sun troopers on his sides. The scientist turned around and pulled out a pistol. The two Blue Suns pulled out their own assault rifles and aimed them at Shepard.

"Take down, Shepard!" One of the troopers ordered.

Shepard threw out a biotic Pull on the Blue Sun troopers. The biotic move hit the troops where it sent them floating in the air, flailing their arms helplessly. The Commander pulled out his shotgun, and shot both troops in mid air, killing them.

With shaky trembling hands, the scientist threw down his gun.

"Don't shoot! I surrender! Please let me go!" The scientist cried.

The former Spectre leered at the cowardly but innocent scientist. He then nodded his head in the direction of the exit behind him.

"Go, before I change my mind."

"Thank you!" The scientist said desperately as he ran out the door.

Miranda shook her head in disapproval.

"You should have killed him. He may alert the others and tell them where we are."

"I don't think he will tell anyone, he looked to scared. He just better hope that there is a spare ship to get him off this prison." Garrus added.

Though it was a rash and immoral decision, Master Chief couldn't help to slightly agree with the Cerberus officer. He recalled on one time when he and a team UNSC personnel infiltrated and captured a Covenant assault carrier the Ascendant Justice. A Huragok repaired his damaged shield generator and then floated away. Unfortunately the Engineer was later shot by Lieutenant Haerson to prevent it from possibly giving the specifications of the Spartan's improved shield technology to the Covenant. Chief did not favor on killing the Huragok as they were the peaceful and innocent ones on the Covenant.

All of them walked up to the terminal.

"If we hack that control every door in the cellblock opens." Miranda warned, but still had her mind dead set on completing the mission.

"It's the only way we can free Jack" Garrus advised.

Shepard turned to the Spartan.

Chief only nodded his head in approval.

"I'm doing it, be ready." The Commander pressed a few buttons and watched the scene unfold in front of him.

All of them looked through the window from the outprocessing area above Jack's cryogenic cell. A mechanical crane extended and reached down to grasp the cell as the four locks holding it in place retracted. The arm lifted the cell, exposing Subject Zero.

The Purgatory's mechanisms unlocked the cryo pod that contained the super biotic. Shepard saw three YMIR mechs activate in response and

soon got a bad feeling in his stomach.

"_Great._" Shepard mentally groaned at how a pain it would be to get through three heavy mechs.

It was then the pod opened.

Miranda blinked as though she wasn't sure if what she was seeing was real. From all of the rumors and talk about how deadly and crazy subject zero was, she just couldn't believe that was what the convict looked like.

"That's Jack?"

"I was not expecting this." Garrus added in.

Jack wore old combat boots that looked like she'd taken them off of military personnel that she'd probably killed, and rather loose fitting pants. As for the waist up, all she had on was a few leather straps that barely covered her breasts with a bald head. And a lot of tattoos that looked very strange.

"I would be careful around this one, Chief. If they had to put in her a cryogenic sleep to contain, then she must be more dangerous than she seems. She does look very... odd." Cortana warned Master Chief.

All three heavy mechs turned and examined Subject Zero as if they were caught off guard by her awakening.

Jack seemed a little groggy at first from just waking from cryo, then got a furious expression on her face as she freed herself from the cryo pod and the metal cuffs that bonded her to the cryo pod with her hands. The instant she did so, Jack ran at the YMIR mechs screaming for blood, and then destroyed them all with the strongest biotic punch any of them had ever seen.

"We have to get her!" said Miranda not wanting to fail the mission by losing a crazy biotic woman.

"Come on, let's go get Jack." Shepard said with him and everyone running out of the outprocessing room.

****_Few moments later_****

The Purgatory was in complete chaos. Prisoners were out and rioting, guards were using lethal force, life support in most of the bays were lost, mechanisms were malfunctioning. Explosions, alarms, and guns were going off, all that almost deafened the screams of the people inside the prison ship.

There were several firefights going on throughout the entire prison where it was the Blue Sun guards versus the prisoners. The battles between the two factions were fierce. While the Blue Suns had weapons, armor, and organization, the prisoners had numbers and creativity in their kills. The Blue Suns were quick to kill of prisoners, but for every convict they killed three more even crazier than the last one would show up. Everytime a prisoner would kill a guard they would pick up their guns and move onto the next one.

Meanwhile, in midst of all the commotion, the team of Normandy commandos was killing any prisoners or guards that stood in their way of their objective: finding Jack. There were just small scattered teams of guards and prisoners out and picking them off was no problem at all. Until they came upon a battlefield.

****_Miranda's POV_****

There were dozens of Blue Sun prison guards waiting for them. All armed and waiting behind cover.

"Why would they be waiting here? Maybe they were guarding something or making a last stand?" This thought was abruptly cut off, as a green blur that she recognized as the Chief flew past her.

She heard several gunshots go off from all around. Automatically going for her submachine-gun, she saw dozens of Purgatory guards coming straight at them, and they took cover behind many crates layed out on the floor.

The Commander pulled out his heavy pistol and fired off a few shots as he ran and killed a Batarian guard. Shepard had dived in the opposite direction, and was now out of sight. Shepard radioed the team.

"Garrus, head to the left flank. Miranda, get to the right and flank them, I'll keep themâ€|" He began to trail off "occupiedâ€|" he finished quietly.

Wondering what was wrong, Miranda responded.

"Shepard, what's going on?"

After a few more seconds, he answered.

"Miranda, Garrusâ€| look." Miranda could had sworn that the Commander sounded flabbergasted or dumbfounded.

Not knowing what he meant, she peered out from behind her cover. There were still plenty of security guards out there, but none were shooting in their general direction. They were all focusing on the Chief, who appeared to be moving faster than she had ever seen anyone move in her life. The Spartan was a green blur in her vision.

He was diving from cover to cover, firing his alien assault rifle weapon near constantly, and only pausing to cycle the heat sinks. The guards filled the air with bullets, but the few that contacted were halted by his strange yellow kinetic barrier. Meanwhile, the guards were dropping like flies in the firefight.

The detonation of a frag grenade took her by surprise as it took out three nearby Blue Sun troopers.

As the Chief ran for the next crate, there were two human Blue Sun troopers that stood in his path. This didn't seem to bother him, as he simply swatted one with his forearm, sending it flying, its torso caving in. The other was directly in his way, but as he dove behind the crate, it failed to slow him at all. The Spartan ran up to him and grabbed him by the neck and used him as a meat shield, while

firing the large rifle with one arm at any unfortunate guards that dared to challenge the green goliath. After the body took enough bullets, Chief tossed the hole riddled body aside like a rag doll and dove for cover behind another crate.

Miranda then saw that a five mixed species group of humans, Turians, Batarians leaped over their cover and made their way to the Spartan's position. The Blue Sun group seemed to be lead by a human legionnaire with a vindicator rifle. The rest of the group carried a various amount of different weapons such as pistols, assault rifles, and shotguns.

The Cerberus officer watched the Master Chief jump over his own cover and charge at the Blue Sun group. It was obvious that the guards were caught off guard by the way they stumbled on their own feet. The human legionnaire shot his vindicator rifle, but the Spartan's shields absorbed the rounds. Chief retaliated by firing his own weapon at the legionnaire and in a few shots the Blue Sun was quickly cut down.

The Spartan continued his run at the now four person Blue Sun group and rammed into a Turian and a Batarian. The Turian and Batarian were sent flying away like they were nothing, but bugs on a windshield. A surviving human Blue Sun fell down on his behind, in fright from seeing the carnage of his teammates.

A Turian threw a right hook at the Spartan, but Master Chief was fast enough to turn and catch the punch. Chief then snapped the Turian's wrist which made the Blue Sun howl in pain. The Turian didn't scream for long as Chief then hit the guard with an uppercut, sending the guard flying with a broken face and helmet.

The last of Blue Sun of the group, the fallen human, tried to get back up but before he could, Chief spun around and kicked the human. The human guard flew across the large room with a caved in torso.

Miranda then saw Chief's yellow kinetic energy flare as it took more rounds. The Spartan instantly dove for cover, while the Blue Suns fought back.

For the next few moments, Miranda watched as the guards tried to surround and pin the Chief down, but found it impossible. He moved far too fast for their simple minds to follow. Shepard reappeared on her radio.

"Miranda, Garrus, let's move."

"Affirmative." She responded.

"Got it, Shepard." Garrus replied.

They still had to get Jack, but it seemed like this task would be considerably easier now with the Spartan's aid. Miranda sprinted forward, and found cover to the right of the Chief's kill zone, content with picking off guards from the sideline.

Miranda could handle herself quite well in a fight, as cold as she was in person, she was more deadly in a firefight. Her method was always quick and careful but very tactic and clever. She was laying

down cover fire as the team moved ahead to complete their assignment. On the other side of the room, she spotted Garrus, who had adopted the same tactic, but with his sniper rifle.

Most of the Blue Suns focused on the Spartan, so the group managed to move closer to the door, but some were observant and turned their attention to Miranda, Garrus and Shepard. They weren't much trouble though as Miranda was able use her biotics to take out some while Garrus sniped like a professional and Shepard worked his magic with his shotgun.

Miranda considered making a break for the door that hopefully lead to Jack, but before she could consider it further, she heard a very unwelcome sound. It was unmistakably the pounding footsteps of an YMIR mech, a ten-foot-tall, heavily armored behemoth that most people would only dare to face.

"_Bloody Hell."_ Miranda mentally swore to herself.

She knew there was no way to fight this heavy mech alone, but before she could even try to fall back, the machine spotted her. It fired a rocket from its arm aimed in her direction.

There was a deafening blast, and Miranda found herself sprawled upon the ground, shaken and disoriented. The crate she had been hiding behind was in splinters, and her kinetic barrier was down. She faintly heard the YMIR's minigun spinning up, and realized that it was over.

Master Chief's POV

In the midst of demolishing the horde of the blue armored troopers, which were considerably weaker and slower than his usual opponents, the Master Chief heard an unfamiliar noise. He quickly placed a few plasma rounds from his plasma repeater in the heads of the two Batarian centurions in front of him, and turned to see a hulking white form fire a rocket at his Cerberus female teammate's position. It was too big for her to handle alone, that much was clear. The rocket made contact with her crate and destroyed her cover. The deadly rocket seemed to have wounded Miranda Lawson as well.

The Chief felt Spartan time kicking in once more, the rest of the world slowing down. There was no time to take the machine out with his grenades for the blast could kill his teammate. He dashed forward as fast as his armor would carry him, getting ready to take the heavy mech head on.

The dust from the shattered crate cleared, and John saw the Cerberus officer on the ground, stunned and completely exposed. The large robot's other arm made a sound easily identified as another weapon. Just as it was about to finish her, he dove at it.

John grabbed the arm that was shooting a rapid fire rounds and shoved it away from his squad mate with one arm. Fast gunfire went off from the arm that shot in the air. The YMIR was foolish enough to try and finish Miranda off with the rocket arm, so Chief repeated the process and shoved it away with his other arm. The mech and the Spartan were now in a grapple match.

The heavy mech tried to throw the Spartan down, but Master Chief

stood his ground. The large machine was strong though, and extremely heavy. It tried to aim its guns at him with its arms, but he wouldn't let that happen for he was stronger. The Chief knew that if he let go for even a moment, it could be the end of him or the Cerberus officer. With a little thought, Sierra-117 thought of a plan. As he was about to commence his plan into action, his shields glowed, and the bar in his Heads Up Display began to drop slowly.

"Behind you, Chief!" Cortana shouted.

Sure enough, more prison guards were coming up behind him, firing at their giant green armored target. As he tried to figure a way to keep from being riddled with holes, his ears suddenly picked up on additional gunfire directly behind him. Chief turned to see one Blue Sun go down to the Cerberus officer's submachine-gun, followed by two more that fell. This caught the attention of the other Blue Suns.

Miranda was up but wounded, still she could hold her own and help the augmented soldier.

Refocusing on the more pressing matter, Chief threw up the arms of the YMIR heavy mech and then rammed it with his body which knocked it down on its back. The giant machine was now down, but not out, still trying to aim at him from the ground. Chief didn't let up, his goal was to complete his plan. He grabbed one of the legs of his mechanized opponent.

He began to drag and spin the mech with his Spartan strength, and after two seconds the mech was spinning in air at the Spartan's grip, while still trying to shoot at him with its mini-gun arm. John moved a little bit to swat at any close guards with the heavy mech.

"Duck!" Master Chief shouted to Miranda.

Miranda did as so, and watched in amazement at how the YMIR mech swung over her. The Cerberus officer recollected her thoughts and dove out of the Spartan's range to keep in a safe distance.

When the Spartan thought he had gained enough momentum he let go of the YMIR mech and saw it soar through the air and collide with the wall in the mid-air and then fell to the ground really hard and greatly damaged. To finish off the robot, the Master Chief pulled out two plasma grenades in each arm and activated them and threw them at the downed mech. One landed on the face and the other on the torso and in a second they exploded in a bright blue flash and the YMIR mech was in tiny pieces.

Chief turned around to see any other surviving Blue Suns. But he only found that most of the guards were now swearing like "Holy Shit", and "Screw this! I didn't sign up for this!" and they retreated to find a way off the doomed ship.

When the Blue Suns were all but gone, he went up to Miranda, who was on one knee applying Omni-Gel to herself. She looked up at the super soldier when he approached and was quite surprised when he offered one hand to help her up, which she accepted.

"Are you alright, ma'am?"

****_Normal POV_****

"Yeah, I am fine. Thanks for the help back there." Miranda said to Master Chief in between deep breaths.

"It's what I do." Chief answered

Miranda gazed and smiled at him for a brief moment, but soon got her focus back.

"Come on, we need to find a convict." Miranda said as she pulled out her sub machine-gun.

"Agreed, we need to move fast." Chief got out his plasma repeater and began to move.

Shepard and Garrus caught up with the Spartan and the Cerberus officer.

"We need to talk about your tactics Chief, once this is over." The Spartan looked at him and simply nodded and they all carried on with the mission.

Suddenly the intercom went off, which caught everyone's attention.

"All guards, head to cellblock one immediately! I repeat, all guards head to cellblock one!" Warden said through the intercom.

****_The next room where Warden Kuril waits._****

Shepard's team opened the door to a large room, and in it, several prisoners were attempting to overpower Warden Kuril. Unfortunately for the prisoners though, Kuril was on a higher level, so they couldn't simply swarm him like they had with the other guards. Also, their weapons were either stolen from guards they had managed to kill, or they were improvised, and they had no armour.

Warden Kuril had high tech Blue Sun armor and his gun the M-76 Revenant Light Machine Gun. The bareface Turian also had his tech armor activated as seen where extra shields appeared over his form.

Three prisoners tried to attack the bareface Turian, but they were quickly gunned down by Warden with his revenant. As the Warden shot down the last of the prisoners and began to focus his fire on Shepard, he snarled.

"Your valuable, Shepard. I could've sold you and lived like a king! But you're too much trouble. At least I can recapture Jack!"

Everyone instantly dove for cover behind crates when the shots hit the ground.

"Not happening! You're a two-bit slave trader, and I don't have time for it!" Shepard combated.

"I do the hard things civil governments are unwilling to! This is for

the good of the galaxy!" Warden declared as he fired another shot, then activated the Purgatory's containment systems to shield himself right before more Blue Suns stormed into the room.

Shepard took a quick look at what they were up against. Warden was encased in a blue orb shield that was once used to contain prisoners, but now instead to shield the Turian. There were two platforms in the giant room, one high and one low. The lower platform had three shield generators that protected Warden, along with several Blue Sun down in the middle. The high platform had the bareface Turian. Warden himself stood on top of a cell behind a metallic fence for cover, for higher ground. There looked to be around fifteen normal Blue Sun troopers, along with a Batarian Commander with his own revanant.

"I count seventeen targets spread out, including the loose cannon Warden Kuril. What's the plan Shepard?" Garrus asked.

It only took a brief second for Shepard to think up of an idea.

"Chief, you and I will take out the main group and get their attention. Garrus you get back and start sniping them. Miranda, you will use your Overload on the pillars so we can take out Warden, find Jack, and get off this god forsaken ship. Got it?"

The commandos nodded their heads in agreement.

"Ready...Go!" Shepard announced as he and Master Chief leaped over their cover and started to lay down some suppressing fire with their weapons.

Garrus sprinted to the left to find a good sniper point so he could have some decent protection, and be able to ambush the Blue Suns when they were in the wide open. Miranda quickly ran to the right, to get ready to disable the shield generators with her overload. Luckily for the Cerberus officer, most of the Blue Suns will be distracted by Chief and Shepard, so she would have no problem on her end.

With so many enemies out, the former Spectre thought of an excellent way to lay out hard damage and wreak havoc on the Blue Suns. Shepard reached over his back and pulled out his heavy weapon, the M-100 Grenade Launcher. Two guards ran at the Blitz hero, but Shepard was quick to put them down when he shot off two grenades at them.

Suddenly, the Commander's shields failed after he took some serious damage from a hail of gunfire. Shepard leaped over a metal fence and took cover. He poked his head out, and saw three Blue Suns in a triangle position heading towards his position. Shepard then bent down slightly on his knees in a stance to get ready for the Biotic move Charge. The blue biotic energy enveloped Shepard, and then he launched himself with a blue streak behind him, at the Blue Sun guard in the back. Shepard slammed into the back troop with the powerful biotic power. The Charge sent the guard flying with his body going limp. Then with amazing speed, Shepard pulled out his shotgun and started to blast each Blue Sun at a very close distance, instantly killing them.

The Commander then hid behind a crate to let his shields recharge. He was about to make his next move, but a male human voice stopped him

in his tracks.

"Hold it right there!" A voice from behind Shepard shouted.

Shepard turned and saw a Blue Sun armed with an avenger assault rifle, pointed at him.

"_Dammit, he must have snuck up on me." _The former Spectre mentally cursed at himself.

"Put your weapons down and stand up slow..."

BANG!

But the guard was cut off as his head suddenly exploded.

The former Spectre blinked a few times to make sure he saw correctly at what transpired with the Blue Sun. Shepard followed the trail of smoke from where the round went off and saw Garrus reloading his sniper rifle. The Turian nodded his head at the Commander, while Shepard responded with a thumbs up.

When Shepard heard Garrus fire off another round from his sniper rifle, he knew that was his time to make a move. With his heavy pistol in hand, the ex-Spectre popped up from his cover and shot five rounds into the chest of a foolish Blue Sun that stood up as well. The Commander crouched back down and brought his hand to his radio.

"Miranda, how are we doing on those shield generators?"

"I disabled one and got two more to go, Shepard." The Cerberus officer responded.

"Keep it up."

Shepard then wondered how the Spartan was faring.

"Chief, what's your status?" The Commander asked over his radio.

THUMP!

The mangled body of a Blue Sun flew through the air and collided into a box, smashing the box to pieces. Shepard carefully looked over to unfortunate dead guard. The crushed and splintered body looked as if it was chewed up and spit out by an angry Thresher Maw.

"Never mind, Spartan." Shepard radioed blatantly to Chief.

The former Spectre directed his attention to the Spartan only to see the super soldier slam the butt of his strange purple gun into an unlucky guard. The Master Chief then raised his weapon and shot out two green ballistic rounds from it. The strange energy easily pierced the helmets of two Blue Sun troops.

"_Is that some kind of carbine?" _Shepard asked himself as he studied the Master Chief's unknown weapon.

Chief shot two more times, and two more guards fell. Shepard kept

close attention to the precision semi-automatic fire.

"_And there's my answer." _The Commander thought to himself.

"Shepard!" cried a deep, furious voice.

The former Spectre looked up from his cover to find out who called his name, only to duck back down again when rapid gunfire shot at him.

"I got a bone to pick with you!" the voice called out again, which Shepard deduced was a Batarian.

The Batarian Commander laid out some suppressive fire at Shepard's position, to keep him pinned down.

"I had some friends that were apart of the Skyllian Blitz! And you and your Alliance dogs killed them all!" The Batarian vented out in anger.

"_Great another Batarian with a grudge." _Shepard mentally groaned as he rolled his eyes and still hid behind his cover.

"What luck for you to come by the Purgatory! My perfect chance to avenge my fellow brethren! And what a better way to avenge them, by spilling the Blitz hero's blood all over the floor!" The crazed Batarian laughed as he continued to spray cover fire at Shepard.

As the battle went on, the warden of the prison, Warden Kuril paced frantically on top of the cell. The barefaced Turian knew the situation was dire. The Purgatory was in chaos, most of his guards were wiped out, prisoners were running amok, Shepard looked to be undetachable, and worst of all Jack was free. The shields that Warden hid behind flickered and weakened as the Cerberus officer took out the second generator.

"_When it rains it pours." _Warden let out a feral growl in frustration.

The barefaced Turian saw that he had seven guards left before him. Toran, the Batarian Commander, seemed to be hell bent on taking out Shepard, so he would have to work with the last six Blue Suns.

"Alright if any of you want to earn a few more credits and get out of this alive, then listen up! I need two of you to take out that sniper! Two of you to guard that last generator with your lives! And the last two to kill that walking tin can in green armor, he has become too much of a problem. Get the job done, or I will vent you all in space!" Warden radioed to the last Blue Suns.

"Yes sir!" The guards acknowledged.

The Blue Suns split up as all of them headed to their newly formed objectives.

****Garrus' POV****

Garrus zoomed in on his custom targeting visor, and saw two human

Blue Suns heading towards him.

"Hmmm, looks like I got some company. Well might as well play some music to get the mood going." The Turian once known as Arch-angel mumbled to himself.

Sometimes whenever Garrus was in a firefight, he liked to play some music on his visor to get a little more of an adrenaline rush. His Kuwashii custom visor had many functions such as magnification, monitoring biofeedback, detection and measurement of biotic fields, kill timer, and even a sound system.

"I feel like playing 'Bang Bang Boom' right about now." Garrus said as he picked the Clubs Kicks song from his visor.

The music gave off a dance mix beat, which created some excitement for the former C-sec officer. Garrus switched to armor piercing rounds for his mantis sniper rifle. The Turian took a deep breath and exhaled. He then shot out from his cover and fired off a round. Garrus successfully shot a Blue Sun guard in the chest, with the armor piercing rounds passing through the guard's blue armor.

"Ha! No scope!" Garrus cheered at his professional aiming.

The other guard reacted by shooting his assault rifle at the Turian sniper.

Garrus was quick to avoid being hit by making a twirling side step. He then activated his omni-tool and threw out an overload.

The tech power caused the guard to drop his gun and fall on his hands and knees. The Blue Sun let out low grunts and groans as the electricity surged through his body.

Garrus then shot off a concussive shot at the guard, sending the trooper flying and sealing his fate.

The former C-sec officer's mandibles twitched with satisfaction on his victory.

"That was easy." Garrus said as he shut off the music on his targeting visor.

****Shepard's POV****

Eezo rounds continued to pummel at Shepard's cover, with said Commander ducking and weaving occasionally to avoid getting shot in the head, whenever his shields took damage.

"Come out, Shepard! I wanna see the look on your pathetic human face when I gut you!" The Batarian Blue Sun Commander mocked, as held down the trigger on his revenant.

"You got it!" Shepard replied back in a shout.

The former Spectre sprung into action by making a dive roll out of his cover, too quick to follow for the Batarian Commander. Once he finished with the roll, Shepard took a knee and pulled out his shruiken sub machine gun and sprayed the rounds at the Batarian.

The Batarian Blue Sun stumbled backwards when his shields failed, but he retaliated by bringing his revenant up and shooting back at Shepard.

Shepard's shields took a few hits, so he quickly made a dash to find some cover. A trail of gunfire followed behind Shepard as the Batarian kept shooting, but the former Spectre was quick enough to avoid a hit. As he ran, Shepard held out his sub machine gun with one arm and fired a quick burst at the Batarian, but the Blue Sun was fast enough to drop to the ground.

The Blitz hero leapt over a white metallic crate and ducked for cover. Shepard panted from the run, but then inspiration struck. He placed his sub machine gun on his side and then reached over and pulled out his grenade launcher.

"Time to end this." Shepard muttered to himself below his breath.

Out of the corner of his eye, Shepard saw Warden Kuril aim his own revenant at the former Spectre.

"Crap!" Shepard cursed.

Shepard jumped over his cover and made a dead sprint across the battlefield as Warden shot at him.

"Gotcha now!" The Batarian laughed maniacally when he saw his chance to kill the Blitz hero in a crossfire.

But Shepard was smart and quick enough to shoot a grenade at the Batarian in front of him.

The Blue Sun Batarian Commander's four eyes lit up when he saw the grenade coming at him. He tried to leap back, but the grenade detonated at the ground before him.

Boom!

"Ahhh!" The Batarian screamed as he fell to the floor, bloody and severely wounded. His armor took the brunt of the attack, but he was far too hurt to get back up.

Shepard kept with his sprint as the trail of eezo rounds exploded behind from the Warden's revenant. He then jumped over the down Batarian Commander, only for him to hear the four eyed alien to scream as the Warden sacrificed own troop to kill the former Spectre. Shepard then ran for cover behind a crate.

"He's got great aim, I will give him that." The N7 marine thought to himself, while he let his shields recharge.

"You won't make it off this prison alive, Shepard! I..." Warden hollered.

Suddenly the blue circle shields around Warden Kuril flickered and then shut off, causing the Turian bareface to panic.

"No!" Warden shouted.

Shepard then heard Miranda's voice over the radio.

"The shield generator's have been destroyed. Warden is vulnerable."

****Miranda Lawson's POV****

The Cerberus officer threw up a biotic shield to protect herself as two Blue Suns shot their assault rifles. A hail of eezo rounds hit the biotic shield, but they did not penetrate. A smug smirk stretched across on Miranda's vibrant face as she casually walked towards the two guards, with her biotic shield still up.

The two troopers started to get worried and confused at the Cerberus woman's actions, so they kept shooting at her. The guards grew ever more fearful as Miranda still held up her shield and kept walking towards them. Her glowing body and heels made a frightening clacking sound against the floor, sent more cold shivers down their spines. With her body glowing blue with biotics, and her heels making a frightening clanking sound against the floor, sent more cold shivers down their spines.

"I'm out!" One of the Blue Suns panicked, as he shook his gun.

"Me too!" The other guard shouted while he searched over his body to look for more heat sinks, only to find none.

What completely caught the two troopers off guard was that the Cerberus officer let down her biotic shield.

The guards looked at each other nervously and then back at Miranda. A few micro seconds went by, but to the two Blue Suns it must have felt like hours in silence.

One guard let out a battle cry as he charged at Miranda. The Blue Sun sent a right hook towards Miranda's face, but the Cerberus officer simply moved her head further to the right to dodge the attack, with a smirk still clear on her beautiful face. The guard tried with a left hand punch only for Miranda to step back with such grace and speed.

The Blue Sun got furious at his failed attempts to even hit the Cerberus officer, and so he launched another sloppy right hook. Miranda caught the arm by the wrist, and then spun around behind the Blue Sun, twisting his arm in a painful process, earning a screeching yelp from the human guard. Miranda placed her black heels on the back of the guard and thrust her leg into his spine, forcing the guard to crumple to his knees.

"Ahhhh!" The other Blue Sun yelled as he ran at Miranda with his gun raised above his head to try to slam it on her head.

Once more, Miss Lawson's body emitted a blue glow and stopped the guard in his tracks as she lifted him in the air with her biotics. Miranda turned and faced the guard who was held in the air. With a forward motion of her glowing arm, Miranda threw the guard at the generator. She threw the Blue Sun with enough force that he crashed through the pillar like shield generator, destroying it in the process.

Miranda glanced at the burnt and bent corpse of the Blue Sun she just threw with her biotics, and then directed her attention to Warden's position atop the cell block. The orb shields blinked a few times, and then went off around the barefaced Turian.

"Hmph." Miranda scoffed at her job well done.

"Ugh..." The Cerberus heard from behind that sounded of a wounded man.

Then with lightning speed and grace, the Cerberus officer pulled out her heavy pistol, turned and shot the guard straight in the head that she once threw down with her heel. The barrel of her gun let out a small trail of smoke.

"The shield generator's have been destroyed. Warden Kuril is vulnerable." Miranda said in her thick Australian accent over the radio.

****Master Chief's POV****

*****"She is right, Chief. Now would be a great time to take out that Turian!" Cortana exclaimed.**

Master Chief looked ahead and saw that there were two Blue Sun, guarding the Elite-like alien. He knew that he would have to take out the duo of troopers before he could get to the Turian.

"That Turian seems to be focusing on Shepard. You shouldn't have too much trouble getting to him, once you get past his two lackeys." Cortana informed.

The Spartan super soldier holstered the covenant carbine on his back in exchange for the plasma repeater. He also reached to his side and pulled out a plasma grenade.

"Betcha can't stick it." Cortana challenged to her longest friend.

John-117 smirked under his helmet.

"You're on."

Chief primed the grenade where it emitted a bright blue light on his palm. He then tossed the explosive weapon where it landed on the chest of a Blue Sun.

At first the guard tried to simply brush the grenade off as if it was dirt on his armor, but it was to no avail. The Blue Sun started to panic.

"Shit! Get it off! Get it off!" The pinned guard cried.

The other Blue Sun reached his arm out to pull the glowing contraption off, but...

BOOM!

The guard was too late. As the grenade detonated, where it vaporized them both in a blinding, bright blue explosion.

****Warden Kuril's POV****

The loud noise and eruption caught the attention of Warden from his attempts at killing Shepard.

"Rrraaahhh! What now?!" Warden roared with fury.

The barefaced Turian's grey eyes scanned the area where he heard the explosion, but he did not see anything, not even the dead bodies of the guards. Warden let out a low growl under his breath, his mandibles rapidly twitching from his anger.

It was a second too late for Warden to see the super heated plasma rounds slam into his chestpiece, burning right past his shields. The barefaced Turian stumbled back a couple of steps from the hit. He looked down to his chest and could see that his armor was burnt and partially melted. He wasn't too hurt as his shields and tech armor took the brunt of the attack, but he was in shock to see that his armor was actually melting.

Then Warden was struck by a couple more rounds in the shoulder.

"Ahhh!" Warden screamed in agony as the plasma burned past his armor and into his shoulder.

The Turian tried to clutch his arm, but his melted shoulder piece was scorching hot.

Suddenly Warden felt that he was knocked off his feet, and this time he recognized that he was hit by a biotic Warp attack. The Blue Sun was thrown right off the cell he once stood on. It was a twelve foot fall, before he landed on the hard ground with his back.

"Ooohhh. By the Spirits." Warden groaned from the rough fall.

The barefaced Turian knew that he had several broken bones, despite a Turian's tough exoskeleton.

Cough! Cough!

Warden started to violently cough up dark blue blood, no doubt from his recent injuries. He tried to get back up, but due to his severe wounds all he was able to do was lean on his good arm. His dark blue blood left a trail from his mandibles, his armor was dented and partially melted, and several chips of his own armor laid out on the floor. Warden's breathing was harsh and rapid, soon followed by violent coughs.

With hazy grey eyes, Warden looked around for his revenant gun. It didn't take long for him to spot the weapon on the ground, which was surprisngly in decent condition. Warden started to crawl and drag his broken body towards his revenant, with much strain and effort. Just when he was in arm's reach of his gun, a plasma bolt shot his weapon. His eyes widen in horror as the revenant was thrown across the floor, where the gun started to melt, just like his armor.

It was then that Warden heard heavy metallic footsteps, headed towards him. His grey eyes shot to where he heard the terrifying

steps.

"Y...YOU!" Warden Kuril shouted when he spotted the dark green armored behemoth.

The dark green armored menace walked up to Warden. Each heavy footstep the goliath made, struck fear into the barefaced Turian's heart. The thing stared for a few moments, like if it was studying or was in deep thought.

Warden tried to look past the visor on his armored foe, but all he saw was a pathetic golden reflection of himself.

"Wha... What are you?" The barefaced Turian asked in between exhausted breaths.

As soon as he asked that question, Warden heard the clanking footsteps of heels against the floor. Warden looked up and saw the Cerberus officer female, walk up behind the the dark green armored stranger with her hands on her hips. He looked between the two and made a mental comparison.

"Heh heh heh. No you are... not with Cerberus, no no no. Cerberus is far too proud to not have their emblem on their products." Warden said with a clever deduction, though it earned him an agitated look from the Cerberus officer.

"No... you are... something else. You are too... alive, to be a mech. Alliance? Hmmm maybe. But we would had known if the Alliance wanted a prisoner." Warden continued, while he secretly reached for a M-3 Predator on his side.

****Normal POV****

"You are a bloody fool. You could have made this out alive if you trusted Cerberus and didn't let your greed blind you." Miranda insulted as she looked at the dying Turian.

"You... would have done same... in my position. Anyone would... have done the same." Warden added while he gripped his pistol.

"No. I wouldn't." Miranda scorned when she thought of her tyrant father.

"Chief, he is reaching for a gun!" Cortana warned inside the Spartan's helmet.

Master Chief spotted the pistol, and quickly raised his plasma repeater and shot Warden in the head, ending his life for good.

Miranda Lawson was startled at first, but she soon spotted the pistol in the Turian's grip and then connected the dots. She and Master Chief shared a look between each other.

_"Twice. Twice he has already saved me." _Miranda thought to herself.

The Cerberus officer reached her hand up to her face and pinched herself between her dimples from disbelief.

Sigh. "Tha..."

"Chief, Miranda look at the window! We found Jack!"

The squad looked up at the window docking bay that they had come in through, and saw Jack running.

Two guards stood in front of her, the same guards that stopped Shepard and asked for his weapons when they first walked in the prison.

With Jack

"Stop!" A Turian Blue Sun shouted with his hand held out.

But the Turian's command fell on deaf ears as Jack sprinted up to them with her body flowing with biotics. She picked up a Batarian with her powers and then threw a punch to slam him into the bulletproof window. There was enough strength in the punch that it actually cracked the glass and killed the Batarian.

Subject Zero immediately turned around and violently threw the Turian into the wall behind him, snapping his spine.

Jack took a moment to look around to see if there were any ships she could hijack. Her wild eyes then spotted a frigate, but stopped when she saw the black and yellow diamond emblem.

"Cerberus!" She spat with venom etched in her voice.

She began pacing back and forth frantically, throwing crazy punches at the air like an insane person. Her hate knew no bounds for Cerbereus for what they had done to her, the life they had stolen from her.

Unbeknownst to Jack a Batarian guard slowly and silently crept up behind her with an avenger in his arms.

Suddenly a gunshot went off. Jack turned and saw a dead Batarian on the floor behind her with a bullet hole on the back of his head.

Jack then found herself facing a Turian, and three humans. One of them was seven foot tall and clad in strange dark green armor with a reflective golden visor. While another one was a male with a shaved head in black and red N7 armor and had a pistol that was just shot with smoke emitting from the barrel. She assumed the one with the pistol had shot the sneaky Batarian. Another was a slender female with black hair and blue eyes, in tight clothes that bore Cerberus emblem.

Subject Zero clenched her fists together, biotic energy circling around her tightened hands.

"Cerberus." Jack hissed between gritted teeth.

"What the hell do you want?" she angrily demanded. Normally she would of killed them, but since one killed the Batarian that tried to sneak up on her she thought she would show a little gratitude in her own

way.

The man in N7 amour who had killed the guard set his pistol aside.

"You're in a bad situation, and I'm going to get you out of here."

"Shit, you sound like a pussy. I'm not going anywhere with you. You're with Cerberus."

The man suddenly seemed a little confused.

"Why does it matter if I'm with Cerberus?"

Jack growled a little.

"They've been on my ass for years, and any time I get free, they put a huge bounty on me. That's why Warden Kuril figured he'd struck gold when he caught me." She finished with a smirk.

"She's destroyed Cerberus property and killed Cerberus people, hence the bounty." The Cerberus woman pointed out, not wanting to taint her work's reputation any further.

"You die first." Jack threatened with her eyes sending daggers at the woman.

"I'm Commander Shepard and I'm here to ask for your help." The man said.

"You show up in a Cerberus frigate to take me away somewhere. You think I'm stupid?" Jack spat not trusting him.

"This ship is going down in flames. We can get you to safety, and we're asking for your help." He then said with logic in his words.

"Look, you want me to come with you? Make it worth my while."

"Join my team and I'll do what I can for you." Shepard assured her.

"Don't make promises you can't keep." Jack warned.

The words the convict spoke made Chief and Cortana widen their eyes a little. Both remembered that Cortana said that to Chief when he had to leave her on the Flood infected High Charity. Dr Halsey also said those words to John on occasions.

"I bet your ship's got lots of Cerberus databases. I want to look at those files and see what Cerberus has got on me. You want me on your team? Let me go through those databases." Jack told him with her arms crossed, making her terms clear.

"I'll give you full access." Shepard then said to her sealing a deal.

The woman's eyes widen at Shepard's remark.

"Shepard, you're not authorized to do that!" The Cerberus officer behind him objected.

"Oooh, it upsets the cheerleader, even better." Looking at Shepard again, she warned him "You better be straight up with me."

To which he nodded.

"So why the hell are we standing here?"she demanded

They finally completed the mission. Four of them started to walk back to where they could board the Normandy, but one remained.

Before she would get back on the Normandy, Miranda Lawson noticed a terminal against the wall. A devious idea formed inside her head.

"Hello." Miranda mused to herself.

The Cerberus officer walked up to the terminal and activated her own omni-tool to hack into the computer. After spending a few seconds and a few careful hacks, Miranda found what she was looking for.

"Miranda, where are you at? We need to leave." Shepard asked over the radio.

"In a minute, Shepard." The Cerberus officer replied as she watched her omni-tool download the footage from the surveillance cameras on the Purgatory. Specifically the videos of the Spartan fighting in combat.

****Finally done. Next is the rewritten version of chapter 5.****

5. Chapter 5

****Thanks for all the nice reviews.****

****Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware.****

****Here is the rewritten chapter 5.****

****This chapter might seem tenous as I had a hard time of what to think of ideas for this chapter. I mainly got my mind set on action right now. I wasn't too proud of this chapter as I feel that I am rushing a pairing in this chapter, it was the only thing I can come up with since my other idea had them arguing but that is going to seem like Gaterkeeper's fic. Don't worry this will be the only pairing rush for awhile.****

Chapter 5: A Little Background Information

****The Normandy SR-2 conference room****

"Lets hurry this up." A rather unpatient Jack complained in a harsh tone.

Inside the conference room of the Normandy SR-2, Commander Shepard

and Miss Lawson were currently ready to debrief Jack. Now out of his N7 armor, Shepard leaned against the rails with his arms folded across chest. His eyes were dead set on their newest pickup, Jack.

Jack herself was also leaning against the wall, but in a more slouched lazy way, with her arms folded across her barely covered chest. The convict had a very bored and agitated look on her face, as she awaited the debriefing. Her eyes vigorously followed the Cerberus cheerleader when she walked in front of her.

"Welcome to the Normandy, Jack. I'm Miranda, Shepard's second-in-command. On this ship we follow orders." Miranda appointed as she stood up straight with her hands folded behind her back. A stance that usually demanded respect.

Respect that the Cerberus officer would never get from Jack.

Subject Zero scoffed at the formalness and looked at Shepard.

"Tell the Cerberus cheerleader to back off, Shepard. I'm here because of our deal."

Shepard raised an eyebrow at Jack's comment, while Miranda squinted her eyes in anger.

"Miranda will let you in the system. Let me know what you find."

An evil grin grew on Jack's face after she heard Shepard. She directed her crooked smile at Miranda and leaned away from the wall, as she got right up in the Cerberus officer's face.

"Hear that, precious? We're going to be friends. You, me, and every embarrassing little secret." Jack mocked.

"Oh no. This won't end well." _Shepard thought nervously, but ready to step in to separate the women if a fight ensued.

Miranda unfolded her arms and tightened her fists. She absolutely hated the idea that Shepard let the convict roam around in Cerberus systems, while she was on the job. Miss Lawson knew it was a complete breach in security, and the convict would no doubt wreak havoc with the freedom she had aboard the ship. But she kept her feelings aside and remained professional.

True, she would love nothing more to send Jack back into another cell, but she knew that the suicide mission depended on Jack and her powerful biotics. So for the time being, she would keep herself in line.

"I'll be reading down in the hold or somewhere near the bottom. I don't like a lot of through traffic. Keep your people off me. Better that way." Jack said as she was about to leave the room.

When Jack opened the automatic door, she nearly ran into a seven foot green dark armored Spartan. This caught the convict quite off guard.

"Wha? Watch it!" Jack shouted as she shoved her way around Chief.

John-117 only glanced over his shoulder at how Subject Zero furiously stomped her way towards the elevator.

"Master Chief, its good to see you. We have a lot to discuss."

Chief was brought back to attention when he heard Miranda call him in a formal voice.

The Master Chief walked into the comm room, with the door sliding shut behind him.

Shepard picked himself off the rail, and walked to the left side of the table in the room. The ex-Spectre knew the Spartan wasn't much of a talker, but he was going to get him to open up as much as possible.

Miranda regained her composure from her nasty encounter with Jack, and folded her hands behind her back while standing up straight. She was very interested to learn all she could about the Spartan and his technology.

"We need more information on you, Chief. It's hard enough to trust someone with a gun in the field. Especially if you don't know too much about their past." The former Spectre said.

"Sharing your intel with us will make it far easier and more comfortable to trust you. It may also benefit the mission." Miranda added.

Miranda was secretly excited to learn about the Spartan's technology, and though Shepard was well prepared for a long discussion that could be hard to understand, Master Chief was not ready. Like most of his Spartan brethren, John-117 was stoic and not very talkative. Chief followed orders and gave them simplistically. He would almost prefer to face a raging pair of Hunters than go through a long, exhausting debriefing.

Luckily for Master Chief, he had a very trusted A.I.

"Chief, place me on the terminal in this room. I can upload some of our history to their A.I. without her finding out about me. This will be easier and you won't have to talk that much. You can go back to the dark lonely space filled with guns that you call home. Don't worry, I won't tell them any classified stuff, a girl has to have her secrets."

John-117 couldn't help but to smile. His computerized best friend had once again helped him dodge another proverbial bullet.

"My suit can upload some of my universe's history to your ship's A.I."

The Commander and Cerberus officer shared a very brief glance between each other and then turned their focus back on the super soldier.

Shepard sighed. He had hoped to get the strange recruit to talk more, but Chief had found a way to slip past even that.

"Go ahead, Spartan."

The palm of Master Chief's right hand emitted a small blue glow. Chief then reached out and touched the table in the communications room.

It was then that both Shepard and Miranda's omni-tools activated. They sifted through the data for a moment and then gazed back up at Chief.

"Thank you, Master Chief. This information will be very helpful to us and the progress to the mission." Miranda commented with a sly but genuine smile.

"The Illusive Man will also be most interested in this data." The Cerberus officer thought to herself.

"I will look over the data later. Your done here, Spartan. You can go back to your quarters." Shepard said.

Chief nodded his head and had started making his way to the exit when Miss Lawson spoke up once more with her thick Austrailian accent.

"You never gave us your name."

Chief stopped dead in his tracks after he heard those words. One of the biggest secrets of a Spartan was their name. It was one of the few and treasured things that the super soldiers remember about their past before their strict training.

"I know this is hard for you Chief, but if you want to earn their trust you will have to give them your name." Cortana spoke inside the MJLONIR armor.

Chief look down to the ground. The only ones to ever call him by his real name was Cortana, his fellow Spartans, Dr Halsey, and Chief Mendez. Any others that say his name, just felt wrong to him. But he needed the trust of Shepard and the others. Chief raised his head back up.

"It's... John."

Both Miranda and Shepard smiled when Master Chief finally gave out his name.

"Huh, both of us have the same first name. I guess its a small universe after all." The former Spectre thought to himself as he folded his arms across his chest.

"Hmmm the name kind of fits him_. And it is little more information to add_." Miranda thought.

The Master Chief then walked right out of the room.

"That went well." Shepard commented.

When he did not hear a response from Miranda he looked over to her, only to see her fiddle with her omni-tool.

"I assume you are going to send that to the Illusive Man." Shepard said as if he knew the Cerberus officer's next action.

Miranda's heels clicked with the floor when she started to walk out of the room.

"Of course." Miss Lawson said mere seconds before the door closed behind her.

_**Shepard's Quarters** _

A few hours later after the debriefing, Shepard was well relaxed in his quarters. He laid back in his bed with a datapad in hand. The Commander had downloaded the information from the Spartan earlier into the datapad, so it would be portable and he could relax at the same time. He also used the data to update his personal codex. Shepard held a personal interest with the Spartan entry since it gave him some additional background info on Master Chief and what he was capable of.

Spartan-II

_ Elite soldiers produced through mechanical and biological augmentation. Picked from the best that humanity had to offer and received extensive military action of all branches. Meant to subdue insurrections in their infancy, without substantial military casualties. Designed to minimize civilian casualties and avert civil war. Substantially reduced the cost of conventional means of pacification._

When the Human-Covenant War began and the alien invaders began decimating the Outer Colonies, the Spartans became humanity's best hope against the technological superiority of the aliens. Upon the arrival of the Covenant assaults, the Spartans became the first major UNSC response to the alien threat. The Spartans continuously proved highly effective against all threats; their heroic rearguard and delaying actions saved countless human lives from the genocidal Covenant onslaught. Their prowess was well known among the Covenant, who came to fear the Spartans as Demons.

_ In 2547 the SPARTAN-II program was revealed to the public in an effort to boost morale among the UNSC. Inevitably the small number of Spartan-IIs dwindled as casualties were sustained. As the exploits of the SPARTANS were a major propaganda boom to the UNSC, to maintain the illusion of the Spartan invincibility, when Spartans were killed they were listed as 'Missing in Action.'_

Through their outstanding performance on the battlefield, the Spartan-IIs were awarded with nearly every medal the UNSC had to offer. The only exception being was the prisoner of war medallion as no Spartan had ever been captured.

UNSC

_The United Nations Space Command (UNSC) is the military, exploratory, and scientific agency of the UEG. The UNSC was formed in the 22nd century, a time when remnants of old cultural ideologies clashed for supremacy in the Sol System. The UNSC served mainly as overseer of UN military operations in space. _

_After initiating massive militarization propaganda throughout its off-world colonies, through the UNSC, the U.N. defeated Communist and Fascist forces in a conflict generally known as the "Interplanetary War", which consisted of several side-battles that took place on Mars, the Jovian Moons and the South American rainforests. Although the Interplanetary War brought a great deal of suffering to both the colonial population and the residents of Earth, it also united humanity's military forces into a common armed force by the end of the 22nd century. _

_Prior to the Covenant attack on Harvest in 2525, humanity was in chaos. Battles on multiple fronts and planets evolved from a group known as the Insurrectionists who wanted independence from the Unified Earth Government. The UNSC fought constant battles against the Insurrectionists. When the Human-Covenant War began and the alien invaders began decimating the Outer Colonies. When the war began, the UNSC became humanity's greatest protector. _

_This fact allowed the UNSC to override civilian rule and establish itself as humanity's primary government. Although the Unified Earth Government was more open to step down, the Colonial Administration, the arm of the UEG ruling over the colonies, resisted the UNSC's rise to power, and was thus stripped of its power. _

_By 2552 A.D., Earth was the last remaining major human bastion, and fell under attack by the Covenant forces. The Human-Covenant War finally came to an end after a UNSC and Covenant Separatists force eliminated the Covenant leadership. _

Covenant

_The Covenant Empire, also referred to the Covenant was a religious hegemony made up of collection of eight alien species that controlled a large portion of the Orion Arm in the Milky Way galaxy. They waged a genocidal campaign against Humanity for twenty seven years.

_

With superior technology and numbers they pushed humanity to the brink of extinction in a ruthless campaign.

_They were defeated due to many factors, the most crucial of which was an internal conflict when a portion of aliens broke off from the Covenant. _

Shepard closed the entries and laid the datapad next to him on his bed. The former Spectre folded his hands behind his head and let his eyes get lost in the ceiling as his mind wondered. There was some interesting information in it, but it still felt like it wasn't the whole truth. It was pretty clear that there was more than just the Chief in the Spartan program, but he had never specified where his Spartans were or how many participated in the program. Perhaps that's why he didn't want to talk about it. Maybe they were all dead. This would explain his reluctance toward teamwork with anyone besides his Spartan group.

He had to admit that the UNSC had some impressive technology for its lack of element zero.

Lost in thoughts such as these, it was particularly jarring to hear EDI say,

"Commander, the Illusive Man wishes to speak with you."

Shepard sighed.

_ "He always knows when to call at the wrong time."_ The former Spectre miserably thought to himself, as he tried to resist letting a loud groan.

"Thank you EDI." He said with the best show of enthusiasm he could muster, which wasn't much.

Shepard dragged himself with tired feet in the elevator to go to the comm room once again.

****_Normandy SR-2 comm room _****

The desk descended into the floor as Commander Shepard made his way into the center of the comm room. The holo view extended around him, leaving him to face the Illusive Man. The Cerberus leader's eyes glowed with the same eerie, mechanical blue color that held much information.

The Illusive Man had another cigarette held between his fingers. The Cerberus leader took a good draw from the cigarette, and exhaled the smoke.

"Shepard, I heard you've gotten a new recruit from that unknown vessel. Miranda forwarded all available information, as well as the video of your interview."

The Illusive Man took another drag from his cigarette.

The ex-Spectre folded his arms across his chest in annoyance. He doubt he would ever learn to get along with a terrorist.

"We sent you all that we know about the derelict frigate." Shepard scoffed.

"The ship was an unexpected windfall. I've got a science team en route to do a more thorough analysis, but I want to talk about your new shipmate instead."

Shepard kept a straight face, though the person in front of him was trying his patience.

"What about him?"

"You seem rather quick to trust the Spartan. It was clear that he agreed to join you purely out of having nothing else to do, and that may prove to be shaky loyalty."

"He's spent nearly thirty years fighting threats to humanity. I doubt he'd shoot me because the Collectors offered him a better deal and he has proven himself to be very effective in a fight."

The Illusive Man took another drag from his smoke.

"I'm not saying he'd actively try to betray you, Shepard. I'm saying that you may find someone with such long and brutal combat experience

frequently questioning your decisions on the battlefield, which does not lend itself to an effective team. You need to find some way of making him realize that you are in charge, before he attempts to subvert your authority. Even if his combat prowess may prove to be worth it, he could always prove to be a hazardous to the mission."

"I don't need you to tell me how to lead my team." Shepard spat with hatred.

"As always, the judgement is yours, but be careful Shepard we don't need a stranger compromising the mission. I'm sure we both have much work to do, so that will be all... for now." He pressed a button on his chair, and the hologram faded into nothing.

"_Glad that's over. But... he might be right about the Master Chief. He just sent us information about him, no real talk or anything. There has to be more about him. I will have to work on it later, for now I got to find Okeer."_ Shepard thought.

"EDI, plot a course for Korlus, we've got a Krogan Warlord to recruit."

"Affirmative, Shepard."

****Meanwhile in the Cargo Bay****

John-117 was in his quarters and for once without his armor on. The MJOLNIR had taken heavy damage from Guilty Spark's laser, which warped the chest piece, so repairs were much needed, along with some cleaning. Fortunately, the parts and kits he had brought from the Dawn could fix the damage. He needed his armor at full combat status in an unknown universe.

"Chief, I know your armor is like your second skin, but you need to take care of your real skin first. You need to go to the med-bay, you haven't had your wounds treated since before the Ark." Cortana said to her long time friend with concern.

"We'll see." The Spartan responded.

"Ugh!... You are so hard headed sometimes!" Cortana groaned.

From behind John-117 heard the elevator door open with familiar high heels clanking against the floor.

_"Miss Lawson." _The Master Chief guessed.

****_A few minutes earlier Miranda's POV_****

"_I need more information on this Spartan, he is holding some back." _Miranda sat at her desk with her hands together close to her mouth.

The data that Chief provided to her was valuable, but she needed to know everything about everyone after all she is a Cerberus Informant. Master Chief has destroyed her bugs and cameras, so she had no way of spying on him in the cargo bay.

"_I think it's about time that me and him have a one on one talk."

—

Miranda got up from her chair and proceeded to the elevator. She was going to confront the soldier face to face... or rather helmet. The super soldier seemed pretty uncommunicative, but maybe she could make him talk for she does have a way with words.

The door to the elevator finally opened and the Cerberus officer stepped out.

"Chief I would like"

But Miranda didn't get to finish her sentence at the strange sight before her. In clear sight, she was staring at the Master Chief without his armor. He had military cut hair, brown eyes, and a plain but rugged face with a few scars on it, incredibly tall and very muscular and was wearing a black tight rubber suit. Miranda stood there and stared at him with an open mouth.

"Is there something you need, ma'am?" Chief asked.

The Cerberus officer blinked a few times and woke up from her trance.

"Huh?... Uh... yes, I wanted to thank you for saving me back on the Purgatory, your fighting style was rather impressive."

"_Flattery is one of the best ways of getting someone to open up."_ Miranda thought in confidence.

"It's what I do." Chief said calmly, while his hands continued to repair his armor.

Miranda walked up to the table and took the seat in front of the armorless Spartan. Miranda took a quick glance at some of the weapons and devices the Master Chief had.

"_Maybe I can get him to talk about some of his equipment."_ Miranda thought with her hopes of getting valuable data.

Normal POV

"I thought this would be a good chance to talk, one on one." Miranda said rather sweetly.

But the Spartan refused to respond, leaving room for the biotic to continue.

The Spartan was able to rub off a scorch mark from the laser's intense heat. He stared at Miranda for a moment, which seemed like a sign for her to leave, but she stood firm.

"You have the most advanced piece of armor that I have ever seen. What are you doing with it?"

"Repairing it," the Spartan simply replied.

Miranda looked over the features of Master Chief. She did silently admit that he had a rugged attractiveness. The tight black suit he wore showed off his muscular aspects very well.

In all honesty, she'd begun to wonder if what waited under that armour was actually flesh and bone. Her eyes did a cursory sweep of his face, cataloguing each feature clinically, admitting that the proportional symmetry did conform to the ideals of attractiveness. That was something she knew a lot about.

"Those are some pretty bad burns on that armor. What happened?" Miranda asked the augmented soldier.

"I was betrayed." Chief stated as he thought how Guilty Spark shot him and the Arbiter and killed Avery Johnson. The answer probably raised more questions for Miranda.

But his tone of voice lead Miranda to the conclusion that he wasn't about to give the intimate details away to anyone, let alone a stranger like her.

"I read the reports you sent me that were about you. They were valuable, but vague." Miranda said to the Spartan.

Chief just continued to fix his armor, feeling less than little need to reassure her.

"He seems like a simple enough guy, straight up. Maybe all he needs is a little quid pro quo to get him to open up enough for me to gain access to his armor."

The idea of opening up about herself to anyone chafed against her every self preservative instinct, but... so far none of her manipulations had worked on the giant. As if he were stone, as if none of her charms had even affected him. It was a frustrating situation, and it was rapidly calling for desperate measures. Information was power and as much as she wanted to keep her own advantages a mystery, she was beginning to realize that Chief wouldn't give her anything unless she gave him something in return.

"_If I can just get him to trust me..."_

It would be a weakness she could exploit.

And so, wrestling against the whispers in her mind warning her not to, she began to speak.

"We both seem to have a few things in common. We are both genetically augmented. I was genetically engineered to be a specimen of human perfection. Everything, from my intelligence, physical constitution, biotic abilities, even my appearance was designed before birth to be excellent. I heal faster than other humans and I will probably live half a lifespan longer. It seems like your augmentations are more... potent than mine."

Master Chief looked up from his task and stared at Miranda Lawson, surprised by this sudden, seemingly out of character remark. She just watched him steadfastly through those enigmatic blue eyes that seemed to be daring him to do something.

'Genetically augmented, huh?'

He supposed that it wasn't unreasonable to believe her; question was why she'd felt the need to tell him at all or why she thought he'd even care. Despite this, though, he felt a strange, betraying restlessness in his chest as he looked at her and wondered what 'genetic augmentation' meant in this universe and if they actually were anything like his own.

"To make the most of my abilities, I was intensively trained. I can shoot a mech's head off from a hundred meters away or just as easily crush it with my biotics." Miss Lawson boasted, while she raised her fist that glowed with a light blue.

'A warning?' he wondered, watching her carefully as the strange glow around her hand died. If it was, it was uncalled for: he was already fully aware of the destructive potential of biotics. _Maybe it was a demonstration._

"However, with these gifts came a burden growing up." Miranda ceased using her powers and lowered her hand to the table.

For the first time since she'd begun speaking, Chief saw a flash of... something through her eyes. She held his gaze stubbornly, but despite this there seemed to be an indefinable unease on her face as she continued in a softer voice.

"Despite my accomplishments, my perfectionist father never showed approval or pride towards me. He always expected more and better from me, forever chiding me to be greater than I already was. He also imposed a very strict lifestyle on me, and forbade me from making friends and having a social life. I bet your life wasn't that much different."

'Ah...' he thought. He understood now.

Miranda didn't strike him as someone who looked for sympathy. But then again, she hadn't struck him as someone who'd willingly give herself away either. So... if she didn't want sympathy, was this whole thing some strained attempt at bonding?

Even though she didn't say it, he could hear the words between the lines. 'We're the same'.

"A little bit." John-117 admitted uncomfortably as the memories of his extreme Spartan training flooded back into his mind.

"We are both great in combat. I have seen what you can do, and it was very impressive." Miranda complemented.

"Thanks." Chief replied.

Her mind screamed and pleaded to her to stop to speaking. But something... different told her to continue, a diverse voice urged her to keep telling him things she always kept secret.

"I didn't have a mother, only a father who was extremely influential, wealthy, and ego-maniacal. He created me by using a modified copy of his own genome, he wanted to create his own dynasty. I couldn't allow that to happen so I ran away. I eventually approached Cerberus and joined them in exchange for protection. I knew of them since my father sympathized with their human-centric agenda and was a major

backer. When I enlisted with Cerberus, he stopped pursuing me, but severed his ties to the group."

The Spartan continued to listen, while Miranda took a deep breath and exhaled.

"Despite the past dealings with my father, I do agree with Cerberus' desire to help humanity. I also enjoy the opportunity to work with people as smart as me and the amount of latitude their clandestine operations afford me. I was given an objective, all the resources I need, and nothing more. I have advanced far enough to become one of the few in the organization, much less the galaxy that meets and answers directly to the Illusive Man, who appreciates my abilities."

"We are a little similar." Chief finally admitted.

He, too, had dedicated his life to the advancement and preservation of humanity. Though he expected his duties required more gunplay and less corporate wrangling than Miss Lawson's. "Latitude" in the Chief's case typically meant deciding whether to kill a battalion of Covenant grunts with a sniper rifle, a plasma grenade, or his bare hands.

The Spartan was opening up, her plan was working. Despite the fact that the victory made her want to smile, Miranda was distracted by the sound of her own voice, admitting those things to a stranger.

"_I never intended to go this far"_ , she thought.

She'd never even considered revealing the truth about her father but... somehow once she'd begun talking she hadn't been able to stop. Maybe it was the blank expression the Spartan had worn the whole time, taunting her into giving away more than she'd been willing to. It was... strange.

"_Whatever," _she halted her meandering thoughts suddenly, locking them away until she could formulate a logical conclusion for them later.

"_All that matters is that it worked."_

"I have told you about me and you have seen our weaponry. Maybe you can show me some of yours?" Miranda searched deep into his eyes looking for an answer.

The Spartan sighed and got up from his seat.

"Alright, but only one. Come with me, ma'am. I will send the data to your omni-tool."

This time, a grin did manage to break onto her face. She had always loved the taste of success. She got up from her seat and followed John.

"You can call me Miranda."

The Master Chief held up one of the weapons. The omni-tool's codex then read, Type-25 Directed Energy Pistol also known as the Plasma

Pistol.

Miranda saw that there was a large amount of data on the gun, so she decided to read over it once she gets back to her office.

The Cerberus officer put away her omni-tool and looked up to the Spartan.

"Thank you Chief, your information was very helpful. I will be sure to keep in touch."

Chief simply nodded his head at her.

Miranda entered the elevator and turned around to see the Spartan watching her. Before the door closed, her eyes made a curious sweep of that unexpected face once more and something unexplained thudded in her chest.

"_That was... interesting."_ Miss Lawson thought.

She admitted that she'd gotten a little carried away with the discussion. Originally she intended to relate to Master Chief and get him to show her a weapon, but she ended up opening up to him instead.

"_He made me go against my plan. Without even saying anything at all. Why did I do that? What made do it?"_

As the doors closed and his face was taken from her sight, she sighed and reached a hand up, running it through her hair. What the hell had that even been? There was obviously no way someone like her had actually been affected by the Chief. So why...

****Back with Cortana and the Master Chief****

"Wow she was right. You two do have a few things in common. She kind of reminds me of Dr. Halsey, working for a secretive organization, cold to some people, leading projects, and very smart. I think she is beginning to like you big guy." Cortana started speaking to John,

"How so?" Chief replied.

"The increased heart rate when she saw you, being friendlier to you than others which is what Dr. Halsey did too. She constantly stared at you and lost focus sometimes."

Chief didn't respond.

"You really are hard headed sometimes. You know that right?"

****_Shepard's Quarters_****

"Shepard, we are closing in on Kolus." EDI informed through the intercom in the Normandy,

"Thanks EDI, tell Jack and Mordin to gear up and get ready for the mission. Get Zaeed too."

"I am starting to like the extra back up." Shepard thought as he began to put on his N-7 armor.

"And tell Jacob to give a tour for the Chief of the Normandy. He might need a layout of the ship."

Alright finished with this chapter. Next chapter is going to be a little more bonding between Chief and some other crew members, while Shepard, Zaeed, Mordin, and Jack are on the mission! Also recruiting Kasumi, and starting her loyalty mission.

6. Chapter 6

*Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware.*

Chapter 6: Recruiting the Krogan

_Kodiak Shuttle arriving on Blue Sun's base on the _Planet Korlus of the Eagle Nebula and Imir System

The planet's surface was nearly covered in starcraft parts from the people recycling ships. The grey hulls of the vessels towered in size, nearly acting as buildings and skyscrapers for the world. Ships that reached near death were stripped of their useful parts and then dumped on the planet. Korlus truly earned the name of starcraft cemetery.

The Kodiak shuttle shook vigorously as it broke through the atmosphere and made a rapid descent onto the battlefield on Korlus' earth. The shuttle made careful and precise maneuvers to dodge any ship platforms that were in their way. The moment the hatch opened, Zaeed and Jack jumped out, their weapons drawn for any sign of danger. Shepard and Mordin followed their example, when they exited the shuttle. All four crouched down behind a pile of debris in case of a sudden oncoming attack.

Several gun shots could be heard from all around, but none were visible or headed in their direction.

Shepard looked over the pile of ship parts and was satisfied to not see any enemies ahead. He then looked back to his team.

"The dossier doesn't say if Okeer is on this planet by choice. Assume hostiles."

The team nodded their heads in acknowledgement as they got up.

The second they took two steps from out of their cover, a rather loud and commanding female voice cried out on an intercom.

_"There is only one measure of success: kill or be killed! Perfection is your goal!"

The clamorous sound easily angered half the team on the spot.

"Someone shut that bitch up!" Zaeed shouted out in response.

"I already want to kill this person." Jack added.

"Stay focused people. Remember, we're looking for a Krogan warlord," Shepard reminded as he held up his katana shotgun.

The former Spectre could not help but think that the one speaking was either arrogant to the extreme, or not right in the head, or possibly both. And that is not something one wanted in an operations leader. That was when he got some good news from their proverbial eye in the sky.

"_Commander, I've successfully tapped into the Blue Suns communications. I'll forward their chatter to you soon," _EDI beeped through the radio.

"_Being hired is merely the beginning. You must earn your place in the mighty army we are building!" The obnoxious voice yelled over the intercom again.

"Anything is better than hearing that bitch." Zaeed complained after hearing the woman over the announcer.

The Normandy commandos moved up a few steps, still with their guns ready and primed.

"Hold on," Shepard called out. He pulled up close to a corner and peered around. "_Seven ahead._"

True to his word, seven Blue Suns stood idly by with their assault weapons in their arms.

"Lookout position, equipped for combat," _observed Mordin when he peaked around with the former Spectre.

"Jack, you and I will go up first. The rest of you assault their position. Be quick so they don't radio our presence. Everyone pick a target and get ready."

Zaeed pulled out his M-96 Mattock assault rifle.

"_Smart money bets that this bloody thing won't be half as good as Jessie." _The bounty hunter thought begrudgingly as he missed his old trusted avenger. Oh the missions he had with that shitty but reliable rifle.

Jack let her biotics flow through her body, getting amped and excited to finally see some combat.

"_Throwing some Blue Suns around will be a good stretch." _The convict thought with a wicked grin on her face, while she popped the muscles in her neck.

Mordin held his M-6 Carnifex in his hands, while he calculated several scenarios on how to kill the mercenaries ahead.

"Let's go," Shepard commanded.

Jack quickly jumped out of cover.

"Hello, dead people!"

She then unleashed a powerful biotic shockwave that slammed into all seven surprised mercenaries. All the Blue Suns flew back and landed roughly on the ground, each moaning in pain.

The three other Normandy commandos poked their heads out to see the damage Subject Zero caused. They shared a few wide eyed glances between each other.

"Reckless and ruthless. Might keep an eye on her." Mordin said.

"I know, I like her already." Zaeed added, while he laughed manically.

Both Shepard and Zaeed leapt out and started shooting the Blue Sun mercs. Two fell to the ground dead, from the Normandy teams combined gun fire while the others crawled to cover.

Out of nowhere, one of the mercs started to glow a biotic blue. The merc looked at his body with curiosity, and then suddenly flew against the wall on his right really hard. He was barely able to keep conscious, his head turning as if he had been spun vigorously, he flew once more to the other side while colliding with a merc, with both smashing into a wall.

Jack laughed at the mess she had just caused, while Mordin fired on the other unsuspecting mercs with his heavy pistol. The Salarian scientist successfully killed a merc after multiple shots into the torso.

A Blue Sun popped up and held down the trigger on his avenger, trying to gun down Mordin. The Salarian was quick enough to roll to the side and react with a incinerate. The tech attack burst the merc into flames, killing him almost instantly.

After a few moments, they stood over six dead mercs.

"We're missing one." Shepard declared as he did a quick count.

"99.99% sure I have wounded him Shepard." Mordin quickly said.

"Found the pussy's blood trail, didn't make it far from the looks of it." _Jack announced as she looked at a line of red smeared across the ground.

Shepard ran up to Jack.

_"_I see it_" _

They followed the trail, and then he heard a male voice gasping in pain.

"Shit. Shit! It won't stop bleedingâ€¦ I'm gonnaâ€¦ son of a bitch!"

Leading in with his shotgun, Shepard looked over a pile of debris to see a merc sitting on the ground, holding a deep wound on his left

flank. Apparently judging by the number of wounds on him but not in vital areas, this was the one Mordin had wounded and not outright killed.

"Nice work, Mordin."

"Stand up soldier I've seen worse_" Zaeed said to the injured Blue Sun. And due to his long career, there was no doubt that Zaeed had seen worse.

"He doesn't need to know that_" Shepard quipped before he engaged his talk with the wounded enemy.

The merc stood up slowly as he used his free hand to wipe the blood and shrapnel from his face to see who he was dealing with.

"I knew it wasn't berserkers," he bit out threw gritted teeth. "You're mercs, or Alliance. I'm notâ€¦ I'm not telling you a damn thing."

"I got a nice application of medi-gel ready for you, but if you prefer if I just keep walking..." Shepard said in a bargaining and persuasive voice.

"Son of a... I just, I don't know anything. I just shoot the overflow from the labs. The old Krogan up there, he's really been cleaning house lately." The mercenary let out between heavy breaths, but this did let Shepard know that his sale had been sold.

"We're looking for a Krogan named Okeer." Shepard prompted while holding his rifle in a non-threatening manner.

The others followed his example. Threats and intimidation were enough for this merc, especially since he was surrounded, unarmed, and injured.

The human merc looked confused.

"Who? You already know more than I do. I just kill Krogan. The old one in the lab dumps crazy ones down here all the time."

"What do you mean by 'crazy ones'?" The former Spectre asked as the mere mention of crazy and Krogan was NOT healthy. Already memories of Saren's lab on Virmire began to come back to him and what they held.

"Jedore hired him to make her an army, but the Krogan he creates are insane, so we use them for live ammo training. It's all crap; I don't get paid enough to goddamn bleed out!" the Blue Sun griped.

"Ah. Would explain why they're engaged with Krogan. Artificial with mental instabilities. Could see why they use for combat training," Mordin speculated out loud.

The team's radios crackled as they began to receive EDI's decrypted communications.

"Outpost Four? Jedore wants us to move. We need coordinates on that Krogan pack."

Zaeed immediately pointed his rifle at the merc, to prevent him from giving away their position. He was not alone as both Jack and Mordin were more than ready with their weapons, with Jack getting ready to unleash a Biotic attack for good measure.

"What's he talking about?" Shepard asked with an even tone.

The merc's eyes widened as he realized that they were tapped into his communications.

"How did you? Umâ€¦ Jedore runs a Blue Suns outlier and she's making Krogans for an army. But they all come out crazy. Tough as hell, but just insane."

"Doesn't make sense. Breeding facilities too expensive. Not worth the cost." _Mordin argued.

_"He's just a grunt. He probably doesn't know anything anyway." _Zaeed responded.

"Then why are talking to him and not killing him?" Jack suggested, eager for blood.

Shepard leaned in close to the Blue Sun with his omni-tool active to show that the bargain was almost over.

"I want your friends gone. Understand?"

"Uhâ€¦ patrol. That last groupâ€¦ dispersed. Lost sight five minutes ago." The injured mercenary stammered.

"Dispersed? Jedore will be pissed. She wants a show." The merc on the other comm replied.

"You asked for a report and you got it. Dispersed." The merc responded to the man quite angrily.

"Sheesh... understood. Returning to the labs." The comms man said.

The injured Blue Sun shut off his radio.

"There, you happy? I'm helping."

"Is the lab heavily guarded?" Shepard demanded.

"There are big guns to keep ships away. We're not outfitted to fight goddamn commandos." the mercenary answered.

Zaeed snorted.

"Ain't that the damn truth." The bounty hunter said with his rifle still trained on the wounded Blue Sun.

Sounds of another firefight broke out in the distance. Shepard glanced in the direction of the sounds to judge the distance before turning back to his prisoner.

"Sounds like the fun is over there. Lets hurry this up." Jack added in.

"What is Jedore planning to do with all these Krogan?"

"Replace us probably," the merc answered bitterly. "I sure wouldn't want to see an army of them coming at me. Only she can't control them. They aren't supposed to be crazy, but they're Krogan. How smart are they to start?"

"He doesn't know anything else, let's kill him_"_ Jack said.

The ex Spectre applied some medi-gel to the bloody wound on the Blue Sun.

"There you go. Now get out of here." Shepard coldly said.

The merc's eyes widened, surprised at the gesture. He turned away from the group, clutching his injury as tightly as he could.

"Shit. Shit!"

"Should have killed him. He knew too much." Mordin said rapidly to Shepard as the team headed to the lab.

"I can vouch for brainy on that." Jack said.

"Waste of clips, we're going to need them if we are going to facing those Krogan he told us about. Come on. Our warlord is somewhere in Jedore's lab." Shepard answered.

The group moved ahead, wary of any mercs and insane Krogan, while Jedore's voice continued to blare overhead.

"Training is part of your contract. Failure to perform means liquidation, legal and otherwise!"

"I'm gonna kill that bitch." Jack said as they turned a corner, already her temper was on the last threads.

"Hostiles ahead. Elevated positions. Impossible to sneak past. Have no choice but to fight._"_ Mordin declared.

Shepard saw at least nine Blue Suns standing atop makeshift catwalks and bridges.

_ "Damn. They probably just shoot at the Krogan and us from up there." _The Blitz hero observed.

Looking further on, he spotted at least three more in the distance. None of them seemed too concerned about the gunfire in the distance.

"Zaheed, support us from back here. The rest of you, follow me. Looks like we're doing this the hard way."

"I got you covered," Zaheed assured as he pulled out his sniper rifle, a Mantis.

Shepard moved ahead slowly, keeping his eye on the mercs above. They hadn't seen them yet, so the element of surprise was still theirs. Crouching behind a fallen metal beam and waiting for the others, he

started picking targets of the greatest threat as he prepared to unleash his biotics.

_"_Lets do it_."_

_Okeer's lab _

"Team Four, do you read? Team Four!"

Okeer, an old Krogan warlord in light green armor listened intently on the recent calls. His predator like eyes narrowed at the radio transmission. He had a feeling in all of his guts that something was different about it. He turned the volume up, and listened in on the merc's call.

_"_Comm, tell Jedore we have a problem. Patrols are going dark. Either the Krogan are pushing back or we're being raided!"

"Rana. Did Jedore place any surveillance outside?" Okeer asked his Asari assistant.

"Umâ€|" Rana stalled as she turned away from their latest Krogan attempt to check. "No. Only inside the compound."

"Hmm. It makes sense I suppose. Too much trash outside for cameras to be effectiveâ€|" Okeer mumbled to himself as he considered the implications.

"Is something the matter?" she asked.

"I believe we have guests and they might be here for me," Okeer muttered as he continued to work.

Rana's eyes widened at the news.

"You're not worried?"

Okeer only gave her a grim smile, a normal characteristic of the Krogan species.

"I've lived long enough to understand the nature of battle. The only thing that matters now is my legacy. Hurry, we must finish these last procedures. Let the mercs and my failures deal with them."

"Ri... Right away!" Rana obeyed as she nervously typed on a terminal.

_"_Uhh, I just can't get a break. Why did I choose to work with Krogan again?" _The Asari mentally cursed at herself as she recalled the last time she worked on recreating Krogan on Virmire with the Turian Spectre Saren Arterius.

She barely got out alive as the entire facility was blown sky high with a nuke by none other than Commander heard he had died and then heard the rumors he was alive and running with Cerberus. Why that was the case she never knew, nor bothered to find out. The last thing she wanted was a replay of Virmire.

Okeer walked up to the tank that contained all of his research. He stared at the young Krogan that slept inside.

_ "Soon the galaxy will know of my legacy and my ideas to rebuild our race." _

_ "Release the others." Okeer commanded, not taking his eyes off his newest creation.

Rana paused and then looked at her Krogan boss, shocked by hearing such a bold order. She blinked twice, snapping herself back to her job.

"Uh... at once." The Asari stammered and typed away more keys on the terminal.

****Back with the Normandy Commandos****

"_Damn it!" _Shepard thought.

The Commander's shields were down from taking several rounds from the Blue Suns. He barely avoided two missiles that destroyed his previous cover, though this did earn him a headache. But all wasn't completely bad. Half of the Blue Sun group had been killed, but five remained.

_ "Two mercs! Right-side on high! They're heavies! Take them down!"

_ "I will destroy you!" _Jack shouted outloud.

Subject Zero launched a powerful biotic attack that pushed the heavy mercenaries off the catwalks.

The mercs were thrown across the ground and slid off the edge, with audible screams.

Shepard climbed back up to his feet slowly behind an archway of twisted metal and looked around. Three mercs were left and armed with avenger assault rifles.

"Should burn nicely!" _Mordin declared as he launched an incinerate from his omni-tool.

The merc that was hit was screaming and running, trying to put out the flames, only to fall off the catwalk and plummeted to the ground with bone-breaking impact and a loud crunch.

"Oh, shit!" A Blue sun hollered as he peeked out and watched what happened to his comrade. That proved to be a fatal mistake as Shepard pumped a round into the mercenary with his shotgun.

"Firing a concussion round!" _Zaeed yelled.

The last merc found himself getting hit by a round that shoved him on the ground, knocking the breath out of him. The Blue Sun tried to get back up, but before he could sit up, his body suddenly became very cold. He brought his hands close to his helmet and was terrified to see that his hands had started to freeze like an ice-sickle.

"N..." But the merc didn't get to finish as his body was frozen over from a cryo blast.

"Should keep him down." Mordin brought up as he looked at his handiwork.

"Let's move up, we still got a warlord to recruit." Shepard ordered with the squad soon following.

The team traveled on with the objective etched in their minds, but they couldn't help to notice the area around them. Several dead Krogan were littered on the ground, each with bullet holes in them and yellow/orange fluid blood that escaped the lethal wounds.

"Bastards never stood a chance." Zaeed said in his own way for sympathy, while he stepped over one of the bodies.

"These Krogan, unorganized, not trained." Mordin inhaled a deep breath. "Mindless."

"We can stop this once we get to Okeer." Shepard said.

"This guy better be worth it." Jack mumbled under her breath.

They walked through a makeshift hole of ship parts, and rounded a corner, but then the group heard more gunshots just straight ahead. The team crouched down and slowly moved up with Shepard taking point. Weapons still readied and drawn, they carefully looked ahead.

What they saw was a lone Krogan in tan brown and red armor, armed with a shotgun, was shooting at three Blue Sun mercenaries. The mercs stood up on a catwalk like the others from before, retaliating against the single Krogan. Two Blue Suns were armed with assault rifles, while the other one in the middle had a ML-77 Missile Launcher.

The mercenary on the left stood up and fired a burst of rounds at Krogan, which nicked him in the shoulder. The Krogan was knocked back a bit, but he quickly recovered and shot a slug at Blue Sun. The merc was shot in the chest and fell off the catwalk.

"Move up! Take out the mercs!" Shepard ordered.

The Commander channeled the biotics through him, and threw out a pull. The biotic move zipped around the cover that the Blue Sun hid behind, and hit him. The mercenary floated high in the air, but not high enough to avoid getting by shotgun slugs from Shepard and the Krogan.

The last Blue Sun rose up from his cover and aimed his missile launcher the Shepard. The ex Spectre saw this and started to run backwards, but it was too late as the rocket blew up a few inches from Shepard's feet.

"Agh!" Shepard hollered in pain.

The former Spectre's shields fell, and he was knocked roughly on his back. The rest of the squad reacted and shot at the Blue Suns. In a mere second, the mercenary was riddled with holes.

Mordin came and helped Shepard back up.

"Thanks."

The former STG nodded his head with a Salarian smile, and then both of them directed their attention to the Krogan.

Feeling the effects of nearly getting blown up fade away, Shepard approached the Krogan carefully.

The Krogan himself seemed to be interested in Shepard as he tilted his helmeted head in a curious manner. Turning around to fully face the human, he walked closer to stand within inches, still holding his shotgun loosely in his hands.

Zaeed, Mordin, and Jack raised their weapons at the Krogan, but were understandably surprised when their commander raised his left hand, silently telling them to stand down.

The Krogan began sniffing Shepard's chest plate. "Youâ€¦ are different. New. You don't smell like this world." He stood up and took a few steps back to fully look at the human. "Seven night cycles and I have felt only the need to kill. But youâ€¦ something makes me speak."

"He's only a week old?" Zaeed asked out loud.

"They must breed them full-size, ready to kill. Not much improvement over regular mercs if they need training." Shepard guessed. His eyes wandered over at the Krogan to judge his reaction or answer.

"Bredâ€¦ to kill? No. I kill because my blood and bone tell me to. But it's not why I was flushed from glass mother." the Krogan corrected in deep slow, almost poetic voice.

His speech sounded simple, but more articulate than Shepard would have guessed from a week-old Krogan. He spoke haltingly, as if trying to find each word in a sentence, but clearly enough for everyone to understand.

The Tank-Grown Krogan continued his explanation.

"Survival is what I hear in my head. Against the enemy that threatens all my kind. But I failed even before waking. That is what the voice in the water said. That is why I wait here."

"Okeer's voice? Did he speak to you while you were in your tank?" Shepard asked.

"I heard the voice. Not like now, with ears. Inside," the Krogan tried to answer. "I called it 'father'. It liked that. But it was disappointed. I am not what it needs me to be."

"A breeding program. Trying to escape genophage effects?" Mordin asked the Krogan.

The Krogan turned his head to look at them, confusion coloring his body language.

"Escape? Cure? They were never whispered. Survive. Resist."

Ignore."

"Ignore the genophage?" Shepard repeated and then turned to his team.

"I destroyed Saren's cure. How does Okeer expect these Krogan to ignore the genophage if not by curing it?"

"Uncertain," Mordin added. "Likely irrelevant. Appears Okeer has had no success."

The Commander turned back to their unlikely ally.

"How did you disappoint the voice?"

The Krogan shook his head.

"I don't know. It was decided before I left tank mother. I was not perfect."

"If mercenary was correct, Krogan prone to mental instability." Mordin stated.

"Then why hasn't this one shot us yet?" Jack said.

"I don't know why. But I am not perfect," the Krogan raised his hand to rub his helmeted head. "There was a scratching sound in my head and it became the voice. It taught me things I would need: walking, talking, hitting, shooting." Dropping his hand and bowing his head, he continued, "Then the voice said I was not perfect and the teaching stopped. And now I am here."

Zaeed chuckled a little,

"Well it did teach him to kill." The bounty hunter said as pointed his thumb to the dead Blue Sun mercs.

"Interesting. Raised, then rejected. Control group? Failed test?" Mordin speculated.

The Krogan only shook his head.

"I don't know, but I am not perfect," he repeated. Being a young Krogan, none of them were surprised that he repeated what he already said.

Decided that they'd learned all they could from the Krogan, Shepard looked around the arena they were in.

"Can you show us the laboratory? I need to speak with Okeer."

The Krogan pointed at a wall.

"The glass mother. She is up. Past the broken parts. Behind many of you fleshy things. I will show you."

Shepard and his group followed as the Krogan walked toward a large metal plate up against the wall. They watched as he gripped the plate tightly.

"Grrrah!" the Krogan grunted as he lifted the plate off the wall and threw it to the side.

"Brute strength. Key aspect of Krogan." Mordin said appreciatively.

"Yeah, Yeah we get it. Krogan are strong." Zaeed pitched in, while not wanting the Krogan to feel cocky at his muscle.

"Rough stuff! I like it!" Jacked added in.

Shepard peered in to see a tunnel running under the Blue Suns base.

"You fleshy things are slow when big things are in your way." the Tank-Grown Krogan observed.

Shepard turned his head away from the tunnel and back towards the tank bred Krogan.

"You could have run or tried to fight your way back to the labs. Why stay here?" Shepard asked.

"I am waiting. The voice told me. If they come, I fight. But I will not run and I will not follow," he answered before turning away to leave and find more mercenaries. "I am not perfect, but I have purpose. I must wait until called. Released." he said as he left.

Letting the Krogan go, Shepard and his team turned back to the tunnel.

"Awfully cramped in here._" _observed Zaeed.

Leading everyone in, Shepard couldn't help, but note the dead merc near the entrance.

"Looks like someone got to him before we did._" _Jack said as she looked at the body.

The group cautiously made their way down the tunnel. After a few minutes of tense silence, a scream reached their ears.

"They're loose! Run for your damn life! They're all free!"

"Open fire!" commanded Shepard as two mercs ran right around the corner and into a hailstorm of bullets.

"Likely more Krogan nearby." Mordin stated.

"No shit!" Jack yelled.

Rounding the same corner the mercs ran from, Shepard saw a vast cave with a network of metal plates serving as bridges to cross from one stone platform to another. For the unwary or clumsy, a deep chasm waited with the bottom too far down to see.

All of this was noted and filed away as Shepard saw four Krogan running right at them.

"Incoming! Spread out and take'em down!"

Everyone scattered, taking different bridges and platforms as they engaged the Krogan, careful not to get each other in a crossfire or crowd themselves in a single place.

Shepard began firing at the approaching enemy as Jedore's voice echoed over the loudspeaker.

"Who authorized that Krogan release? Okeer? I will have order in my compound!"

Shepard fired three rounds from his shotgun at his Krogan berserker, but the Krogan kept coming with a counter attack with its own shotgun. The former Spectre powered up his biotic energy, and then propelled himself at the enemy with a biotic charge.

The Krogan staggered back and roared with pain and fury. The reptile came back and swung a powerful fist, only for the N7 marine step back. The Krogan, blinded by his rage, swung again but with a bit more range than before.

Shepard ducked and quickly brought his shotgun under the scaly chin of the Krogan. When he pulled the trigger, the Krogan's head erupted, with chunks of its head flying around.

"Messy, but it worked." The Blitz hero said more to himself.

Suddenly, Zaeed flew past Shepard and hit the ground with his back. He then looked ahead and saw one of the Krogans, wearing a nasty grin on its scaly face.

"Ow! That goddamn hurt!" The bounty hunter called out.

"Needing any help?"

"Nah. Remember how I told you how I killed that one Krogan." The bounty hunter said, while he pulled out a combat knife.

Zaeed let out a battle cry and charged at the Krogan, knife tightly gripped in his hand. He jumped up and lodged the blade deep into the Krogan's skull. The Krogan howled in agony, and tried to throw the human off, but Zaeed held on like if he was holding onto a bull in a rodeo. The hunter struggled to hold on the large reptile. Zaeed twisted the blade and heard the Krogan cry even louder. He then pressed both of his feet on the Krogan's chest and pushed himself off, yanking the knife away at the same time.

The Krogan's eyes rolled to the back of his head, and crashed to the ground like a tower, with an audible thud.

Shepard smirked and tore his eyes away from the dead Krogan and towards to the bounty hunter.

Zaeed was breathing rather hard, but still had a grin on his face.

"And that's how you do it." The hired gunman said, cleaning the blade off and sheathed it.

Sweeping the cavern for the others, the Spectre saw that everything was under control. One Krogan soared through the air and over the abyss from Jack's biotics. Another Krogan was rolling around trying to put the fire out on his armor from Mordin's incinerate attack.

"Flammable or inflammable, forget which. Doesn't matter."

Shepard and Zaeed crossed bridges to regroup with everyone else.

They managed to get to Jack and Mordin just as he reignited the fire the Krogan tried to put out with another shot of incinerate, finishing it off.

"Hostiles taken out, Commander"

"Move out. They'll know we're here soon if they don't already."

"Krogan took down the grid! We're blind getting hit on all sides! Where are Jedore and her personal guard?" A Blue Sun shouted in fear over the radio.

After navigating the dark cavern and fighting off a few more Krogan and Blue Suns, the squad finally reached a locked door. One quick bypass, and they were climbing up a set of ramps, hopefully to the surface.

When they reached the top, everyone flanked the door and entered, only to find it empty. It was just a common room of a ship, but just as derelict as the ship itself. The staccato sounds of automatic rifle fire could be heard through the door opposite.

Flanking the door again, everyone prepared themselves as Zaeed opened the way and charged in. The lone merc fired with his mattock rifle on the Krogan below and then took a concussion blast directly to his back and fell over the railing. The bounty hunter took cover immediately as the mercs on the opposite side of the killing grounds saw what happened and opened fire.

"Missiles incoming!" Zaeed warned.

Shepard and Jack cleared doorway and ducked behind the railing while Mordin waited. Looking down the aisle they were on, Mordin spotted an open archway.

"Doorway ahead! Watch for incoming hostiles!"

"Zaeed, we'll hold that door! Jack and Mordin, you two take everyone else and get those heavies!" Shepard ordered.

Waiting for pause of enemy fire, Shepard ran toward the opening. Zaeed was already there, exchanging fire with whoever was inside.

"I do not pay for failure. Do your jobs, I want them dead!" Jedore shouted over the intercom.

Running to the opposite side of the doorway from Zaeed, Shepard

counted at least five inside when he peeked inside.

"Jack!" Shepard yelled out.

The female biotic looked up and saw what he meant. She thrust an arm out, and three mercs were blown back from a biotic attack courtesy of Subject Zero.

Taking advantage of the distraction, Zaeed and Shepard ran in and shot everyone before they could take cover.

Shepard sprinted inside while looking out for other targets. Ducking behind the remnants of a counter, he looked up to see another door at the far-left side of the room open, admitting four more mercs into the fray.

Suppressing a groan, Shepard called out.

"Four more incoming."

Then in an instant the four mercs were floating in air with a biotic glow around them. Shepard looked over to see that Jack had used Pull on them. She flashed an evil smile.

"Pick a target!"

Everyone got out and shot a few rounds into the floating helpless mercs. They were now floating dead corpses. Shepard's team proceeded to find Okeer.

"Concentrate on the Krogan charge or we're all dead! Who was the genius who gave them arms?" The intercom shouted out again. "What the fuck? I think we have commandos inside! Repeat! We're tracking an unidentified commando unit inside our base! Over!"

"I paid for competence! Kill the trespassers! I will deal with the traitorous Okeer_!" _Jedore shouted through the intercom.

"Berserkers are going down, but the outsider commandos are still incoming! Repeat, still coming!" A Blue Sun said over the radio.

Another blast of biotics sent three mercs over the railing and far below into the pits where the Krogan were stalking. The infiltration team continued their advance toward the labs, the waves of mercenaries failing to stop their charge.

"I need everyone out of the labs to fight this! Every floor, every outpost! Move!" Jedore commanded.

"Suppressing fire!" Shepard ordered.

Everyone began firing down the wide bridge holding back the flood of Blue Suns.

Mordin then used a Cryo-Blast to freeze a merc. The merc's body froze over and Mordin put a few rounds in it from his heavy pistol to finish him off.

Shepard used a biotic charge on an unfortunate Blue Sun, which sent it to its doom off the edge. Shepard was close enough to catch the last merc off guard and put a shotgun round in him, which silenced him forever.

The loudspeakers crackled to life again.

"No more! I command that they be killed! Why is that so hard to understand?"

Shepard's team waited for the subsequent explosion before rushing in to sweep for any more threats.

"What do you mean Jedore's holding the mechs? She'll lose all her toys if we don't get backup!" A Blue Sun shouted over the radio.

"This means we have to blow up mechsâ€¦ good." Jack said.

"Undisciplined. Unprepared. Training wasn't very effective. Or leader is inexperienced. Or incompetent. Either way, little trouble," Mordin concurred, probably in all seriousness.

"Cut the chatter. Combat radar says there are still some hostiles left," Shepard declared.

"I think we are getting close, so expect a lot of mercs." Zaeed said.

Everyone readied themselves and took whatever munitions were lying around.

"There are four of them! Four! Anything can be killed if you do your damned jobs!" the loudspeaker blared out.

"Jedore! Damn it, someone get her off the speakers and out here!" a merc screamed into the radio.

The team saw a door and got ready to breach it.

"Go!" barked Shepard.

The four spread around the large room they were in, hiding behind whatever cover they could find and began exchanging gunfire with the mercs.

"Trespassers are topside! Tell Jedore we can't hold them and the Krogan! We're getting slaughtered!" A merc shouted.

The radio description was accurate. Jack would use her biotics. Mordin would use his tech. Zaeed would use his advance training and experience.

"Concentrate fire on my position! Concentrate on â€" Argh!"

The merc's orders were cut off by a burst from Shepard's shotgun as he sprinted from location to another, using biotics or conventional weaponry when needed.

"Squad Four? Outpost! Damn it! Have to do everything myself!" Jedore ranted.

Using pull by Jack to send a Blue Sun in the air followed by incinerate tech from Mordin secured their victory.

Everyone regrouped at the far door and prepared to enter when EDI's voice chimed in.

"Commander. According to thermal scans, the room you're about to enter carries a significant amount of heat sources, likely caused from heavy machinery. PIt's likely that you're about to enter the lab."

"Thanks EDI_," _Shepard said gratefully to the AI.

Turning back to the door, Shepard stepped forward and activated his omni-tool, he started to remotely rewire the lock. In the matter of seconds, the display changed from red to green.

When the door opened, the group peeked in and they saw an Asari dressed in a lab uniform looking at them in expectantly.

"Shepard, don't shoot! You know me!" the Asari shouted out when she saw him raise his shotgun.

"_She does seem a bit familiarâ€|" _Shepard thought_._

Everyone entered the room with weapons drawn and spread out, inspecting the laboratory in their own ways. Zaeed and Jack conducted their own sweeps to double-check for any threats, while Mordin eyed the equipment around them with some appreciation.

Shepard lowered his weapon as he approached her.

Taking that as her cue, the Asari continued talking.

"I shut down the security cams as soon as I saw it was you." Offering the Spectre a smile, "Never thought I'd say it, but I'm glad it's you shooting up the place."

Noticing that he hadn't put his weapon away, she turned serious.

"Sorry. Rana Thanoptis. You let me go when you destroyed Saren's lab on Virmire. Had to outrun a nuke in a utility pod, but it's still a second chance."

"Now I remember." Shepard said as he recalled her.

It was interesting as to finding her in another Krogan breeding facility and the fact that she was apparently working for Okeer.

"I assume you have a good reason for being at this lab."

"Don't worry! I'm not wasting the chance you gave me!" she jumped in. "My work here â€" strictly beneficial! Not for the mercs. Jedore's on a standard power strip. But Okeer is trying to do something good, I can tell. Even if his methods are a littleâ€" extreme." She said warily as she looked over to a human skeleton in her lab. "Everyone

deserves a second chance right? And sometimes giving one pays off. I take care of my debts."

"What's Okeer trying to do here?" Shepard asked.

"It's complicated. Jedore wants a private army, but Okeer mostly ignores her. He's running the project for his own reasons. I created a mental imprint routine to educate his tank-bred, but most don't get through it. He dumps them for some reason." Rana explained as she looked at a dead Krogan on a medical bed. "He wants to help his people, but he's not looking for a genophage cure, and he's not going for numbers. That's all I know."

"Is helping me suppose to make up for working for Saren or whatever you're doing here?" Shepard asked.

"No, but it is a start, I wouldn't have had without you. So maybe I'm not the best example of moral research, but give me a little credit for trying. Now if you don't mind I am going to run like hell before you blow the place or something. I know how you work."

Rana then ran past the Normandy commandos and left the lab.

"Should have killed her. Too much knowledge without ethical boundaries." Mordin suggested in a fast sentence.

Shepard ignored it and opened the next door.

He spotted a Krogan on a terminal next to a large tank, which held a young Krogan.

"Here you are. I watched your progress. It's about time." The group turned and saw an old Krogan. "The batteries on these tanks will not wait while you play with those idiotic mercs."

"I take it your Okeer." Shepard stated. "You don't seem particularly cagedâ€¦ or grateful that I'm here."

"You may claim to be here to help, but the formerly deceased Shepard is not a sign of gentle change." Okeer turned to the former Spectre. "Surprised? All Krogan should know you. I'm sure Rana has already revisited your actions on Virmire." Okeer responded.

"I don't have a lot of room for finesse. If there been any other solution, I would have considered it." Shepard said as he remembered sacrificing Kaiden Alenko and setting off a nuke on Saren's Krogan facility.

"But I approve. Saren's pale horde were not true Krogan. Numbers alone are nothing. The mistake of an outsider, one that these mercs have also made."

Okeer walked to a window showing a room full of tanks, each containing a Krogan.

"I gave their leader my rejects for her army." Okeer dismissed. "But she grows impatient. It's time for you to take me out of here."

"Personal issues irrelevant. Here for the Collectors." Mordin

said.

Okeer just nodded.

"I see. Yes, Collector attacks have increased. A human concern. My requests were focused elsewhere," he said as he walked toward the lone tank. "I acquired the knowledge to create one pure soldier. With that, I will inflict the greatest insult an enemy can suffer. To be ignored."

"Your research for the perfect soldier created a lot of failures. You don't care about them?" The former Spectre asked.

Okeer shook his head.

"I failed no one. My rejects are exactly what Jedore asked for. She simply lacks the ability to command. They are strong, healthy, and useless to me. I need perfection. If a few thousand are rejected, so be it. My work will purify the Krogan. We will not be restored, we will be renewed." Okeer declared with a clenched fist.

"I thought the Krogan ideal was to return to the numbers that threatened the galaxy." Shepard pointed out.

Okeer turned and faced them.

"We will not need numbers. My soldier is a template. It is a greater threat than all the phantom siblings that would have been at its flank. The galaxy still bears the scars of the horde. But it will learn to fear the lance."

"So you don't want to cure the genophage?" Shepard began to understand.

"Contrary to what survivors claim, the genophage does not produce strong Krogan â€" the only quality it filters is the ability to survive the genophage," the warlord answered.

"For every thousand stillborn, too many weaklings live. Every survivor is branded as precious. That's produced more coddling than your collective human teats!" Okeer said in disgust.

Okeer wasn't the only one disgusted. It was only thanks to his mask that his expression was hidden. Shepard really didn't want to know how the warlord knew so much about human anatomy and physiology.

"I say let us carry the genophage! Let a thousand die in a clutch. We will defeat it by climbing atop out dead. That is the Krogan way."

"What did you get from the Collectors? I need whatever information you know about them."

"They are strange," he described. "So isolated, yet very available when your sacrifice is big enough. I gave them many Krogan. I may have information for you, but the tech was consumed in my prototype. After I determined how to use it without killing the subjects," he added dispassionately. "Their deaths were unfortunate, but I only need one success to start the process."

Shepard then decided popped the big question.

"Your methods are extreme, but you know how to deconstruct a threat. Will you help us?"

"Perhaps I can strike a deal to secure passage." the warlord negotiated. "But my prototype is not negotiable. It is the key to my legacy."

Before Shepard could tell Okeer what he could do with his prototype, the doors to the lab suddenly closed and locked themselves.

Jedore's voice returned through the loudspeakers again.

"Attention. I have traced the Krogan release. Okeer, of course."

The Krogan stomped his way to the nearby window and looked down. Following his example, Shepard walked over and finally saw the woman behind the voice. At the bottom floor, past all the laboratory tanks, a telltale glow of tech armor revealed Jedore. She was around 5'6" with dirty-blond hair and a permanent scowl etched on her face. She was pacing around the tanks agitatedly and speaking into a headset.

"I'm calling 'blank slate' on this project. Gas these commandoes and start over from Okeer's data. Flush the tanks!"

Soon after her proclamation, a hissing sound filled the room. White gas could be seen coming in from various vents lining the laboratory.

"She's that weak-willed? She'll kill my legacy with a damned valve!" Turning to the former Spectre, he came up with an idea, "Shepard! You want information on the Collectors? Stop her. She'll try to access contaminants in the storage bay." Okeer growled.

"You couldn't just start over, like she plans to? What's the big deal?"

Okeer placed his hand against the glass.

"This tank is pure. It involved much trial as data. Starting over will not duplicate it. It must survive. But you'll have nothing if she poisons us all," he said with a tone of resignation. "Jedore will be with the rejected tanks. Kill her. I will stay and do what must be done."

"Let's go," Shepard said.

They ran over to the door that led to some ramps. They followed them to find another set of ramps leading toward Jedore's floor.

"I don't care who they are, I want them dead! This is my world! I'll poison them all!" Jedore screeched.

"This bitch is going down." Jack said.

There was Jedore and a lone Krogan out. Everyone took aim and fired at the Krogan. The Krogan was dead in a few seconds after taking the hail of bullets. A second later, a missile screamed right by and

impacted against the far wall.

"I have more where that came from!" Jedore yelled as she fired a rocket from her ML-77 Missile Launcher.

The missile flew and destroyed one of the fragile crates. Jedore kept firing missiles like a mad-woman not hitting anything, since she was too caught up in her anger to focus on the fight. That was both a boon and a curse, boon on the fact that her anger made her more predictable, curse that it did not lessen the danger she posed with that in her hands.

When she said that, the YMIR mech activated behind her. The heavy mech walked up and shot its mini-gun arm at the Normandy commandos, which hit Jack's shields. They all took cover and looked at each other, while Jack reported that she was fine. They all nodded their heads as if they telepathically talked to each other.

The squad rose up from their cover and all fired their weapons at the YMIR mech. After about eight seconds, the shields were down on the heavy mech.

Zaeed and Shepard switched to Incendiary ammo, while Mordin launched an incinerate and Jack kept firing her own shotgun. Zaeed and Shepard joined in on the firefight with the Incendiary ammo, which helped deplete the armor of the YMIR mech quicker than normal rounds would have.

The armor of the mech were gone, leaving it vulnerable to all attacks. Jack and Shepard both then used the biotic move pull on the machine, which caused the mech to float in the air.

Zaeed threw an Inferno grenade and Jack used her powerful biotics, which sent the YMIR across the room a little, but luckily close enough to land on top of a crazy Jedore. Mordin then used cryo-blast to freeze the mech on top of the Blue Sun commander.

Assuming it was safe, the team walked up to the Jedore with the mech on top her as it started to unfreeze.

Jedore looked to Shepard and his team and glared at them.

"Damn you!"

Seconds later the YMIR mech exploded killing Jedore, but not effecting the Normandy commandos.

"Well that takes care of that." Zaeed said after watching what happened before the team. Once the cacophony of battle gave way to silence however, another set of alarms started blaring.

"Commander, the lab alarms coincided with a systems failure. The remaining lab systems are unprotected and I have gained limited access." reported EDI.

"What's happening?"

"According lab scanners, the room is flooded with toxins and Okeer's personal life signs are failing rapidly. I recommend haste."

"Damn it! Let's go!" Shepard called out as he rushed to the doors and ramps that led back to the lab as an automated announcement sounded around them.

"Contamination detected. Emergency vent in progress. Contamination detected. Emergency vent in progress."

Reaching the door to the lab, they found it was locked again. Shepard knelt down and started the bypass again. Seconds later, the door opened to reveal the remaining traces of toxic gas being sucked away in the overhead vents.

Stepping inside the room, he saw Okeer's body slumped over his console. Mordin ran up and scanned the body with his omni-tool.

"Too late," he said out loud after a few seconds of scanning.

Shepard walked up to the body and noticed the console had a message address to him. Tapping the commands to play it, Okeer's face appeared on the screen.

"You gave me time, Shepard. If I knew why the Collectors wanted humans, I would tell you. But everything is in my prototype. My legacy is pure. Thisâ€¦ one soldier, this grunt. Perfectâ€¦" As Okeer's final message played out, everyone gathered around the tank he tried desperately to protect.

"He gave his life for this one little Krogan." Zaeed stated.

Mordin shook his head.

"Delusional. Unlikely one Krogan, however strong, could have impact Okeer wanted," he said before looking at Shepard. As if realizing something he added hesitantly, "Amâ€¦ almost certain. Suggest leaving it."

Shepard tilted his head at the Salarian.

"Afraid he'll make your genophage obsolete?" he asked neutrally.

"No," Mordin said in a neutral tone of his own. "But Krogan genetically dangerous. Socially dangerous as well. Have enough enemies without adding this."

"I will gladly take care of him if he tries anything." Jack said, still thirsty for blood.

"We won't know until he's out. Which is too late if there's a problem," Shepard said and then brought his hand to his radio.

"Normandy? Okeer is a no-go. But we have a package that needs retrieval. And he's a big one."

Zaeed snorted.

"He is not as big as the Spartan, probably not as tough too."

"Maybe." The former Spectre simply muttered.

****_On the Normandy SR-2 with Master Chief and Jacob_****

"This is the comm. room where Shepard holds meetings, talks with the Illusive Man, and debriefs the new recruits." Jacob informed the Spartan.

Master Chief simply stood there in silence, only making small glances around the room. He had been in the communication room a couple of times already, so he already knew where and what it was like.

The Cerberus operative started to feel a little awkward in the quiet air. He was more comfortable talking with people that actually... well talked. The Spartan was quiet as a rock and slightly intimidating.

"Anyway... let's go to the lab."

They exited the comm. room and turned right to enter the science room.

"This is the Normandy's lab. Dr. Mordin Solus mainly occupies himself here by researching on Collector technology. Some of Cerberus's state of the art technology is in this very room. A lot of money was put into here, so if you want to experiment or upgrade something, this is the place to do it. You know I bet Mordin will love to take a crack at your tech. Good luck getting him to stop talking about it though."

Master Chief looked around, while Cortana spoke inside his helmet.

"Not as high tech like Dr Halsey's labs, but it will do. I could use this lab to figure out some of the machinery of this universe like their dark energy. I have had a theory on this eezo technology. I can probably reverse engineer some of our UNSC bullets and put some of the eezo in them so they can be more effective against the technology here, and I know how you miss your assault rifle." Cortana said.

"We can come up here periodically, if you want?" the super soldier replied.

"Thanks Chief. I have some other thoughts about your armor and Covenant weapons, but I need to think about them more."

"Alright." Spartan-117 said to both Cortana and Jacob.

"Come on, let me show you the armory. I got a feeling you will like it better than the lab." Jacob said as he led the green giant to where he mainly stays.

They walked across the hall and into the armory. Guns of all types were either laid out on a table or hung up on the wall. The room was similar to an armory on a ship in the UNSC, just smaller.

"Here is where we keep our weapons that are bought from stores or given to us from Cerberus. If you need something that shoots, we probably have it. You can try some out whenever you like, it ought to

be different from your guns." Jacob said while he gestured to some of the mass effect weapons.

"Maybe, but thanks."

The weapons were still quite foreign to him as they used the strange mass accelerators, but he was learning. He knew that eventually he would have to use their tech. Yes he had a large amount of UNSC and Covenant armaments, but he had no way to refill the ammunition. His guns would run dry, and he would need to adapt to survive.

"_Three words, quite a mouth full for him." _Jacob thought to himself.

"Well when you do, you can find me here. How about we check out the crew's quarters?"

Both of them headed to the elevator. Once inside Jacob pressed a button that triggered their descent down to the next floor, though the few seconds it took felt like hours for Jacob for it was pretty awkward for him. Standing next to a seven foot quiet killing machine was not very fitting.

The elevator door finally opened and the two exited it, with the Cerberus operative continuing the tour.

"Here is where most of the crew spend their downtime. The boy's bathroom is on the right, and the girls on the left. The sleeping quarters are on the other side of the girl's bathroom."

The two walked in the middle of the cafeteria area, where some of the Cerberus workers were eating a decent meal or chatting.

"This floor is where everyone comes to eat food cooked by Mess Sergeant Gardner or seeks medical attention from the med bay on the right. Miranda Lawson's office is on the left, but I understand you already met her. I bet she will want to talk to you again soon."

Master Chief scanned the area to see some of the Cerberus crew members give him strange looks or ignore him and carried on.

"The Main Battery room is down in the middle of the room past all the cryogenic pods. Garrus Vakarian spends most of his time there. I actually got to get some specs from him, mind tagging along?"

Operative Taylor led the Spartan down the isle of cryo-pods and towards the battery room. As Chief passed by the pods, he couldn't help but to think how small they were compared to the cryogenic pods in his universe. In apperance they seemed similar to the single Elite drop pods, but far shorter in size. He recalled several times, how the Sangheili hade tried to ambush or assassinate him through orbital insertion. He brought his focus back, and followed Mr Taylor.

The automatic door slid open to the room.

"Hey Garrus, how is the new cannon coming along?" Jacob asked when he stepped into the room.

The scarred Turian got off the terminal and faced the two humans.

"It's good to see you Jacob," His trained eyes then traveled towards the person behind the human, "...and you brought a friend. Well it should be a few more days until the Thanix cannon gets installed. Once it is, this ship should be able to punch through almost anything." Garrus stated.

"Sounds great, I can't wait to see them in action. The Collectors won't see it coming." Jacob said with a smirk and rather excited for their progress.

Garrus then directed his attention towards Master Chief.

"I am surprised to see you down here, Chief. You did a hell of a job on Purgatory. Those mercs didn't know what hit them. Glad you're on our side."

The augmented soldier simply nodded his head at the alien.

"How are your cybernetics holding up?" Jacob asked the Turian.

"They're not so bad. You know some women find facial scarring attractive. Mind you, most of those women are Krogan."

Both Jacob and Garrus chuckled at the comment.

Chief watched with curiosity at how an alien and a human could get along so well. Even in his universe where the UNSC had to team up with the Covenant Separatists, there was still a high amount of tension and grudges. Many had to refrain from killing each other, like when he almost shot the Arbiter when he crashed on Earth. He highly doubted that the relationship had lightened up much since he had been gone.

"Alright, I will let you get back to work, Garrus. See ya." Jacob said as he and the Master Chief started to leave the room.

"Nice talking to you." Garrus said before they left.

The two walked through the cryogenic pod isle again, but the Cerberus operative stopped.

"You already seen the other floor below, so I am going back up to the armory. If you have any questions you can find me there."

Chief only watched as the Cerberus operative left.

With that done, Jacob headed back to the elevator.

Cortana then spoke inside the MJOLNIR armor.

"Chief, I think now would be a good time to get your injuries checked and I am not taking no for an answer."

"Cortana I thi—"

He didn't get to finish as the A.I. cut him off,

"No Chief! You still got wounds from the Ark and they need to be checked by a proper medic. Before you know it, you will be a walking corpse."

John-117 let out a sigh in defeat. Sometimes there was just no arguing with her.

"Fine."

"Thank you."

The Master Chief made his way to the door of the medical lab on the current floor. The door opened revealing an elderly woman typing on a hand held datapad. She had short greying hair, blue eyes, and a Cerberus medical officer's outfit. Spartan-117 walked up to her, but the doctor was the first to speak.

"Ah you must be the, Spartan. You have been quite the talk around the Normandy lately. I don't think we have been properly introduced. I am Dr. Chakwas, the doctor and medic of the Normandy, pleasure to meet you Master Chief."

"Likewise, ma'am."

"Now is there something you need?"

"Yes, I require medical attention."

Chakwas was put back at that, usually she had to order people coming back from missions to come to her. Or have the others bring them to her when they got back. This was the first time a soldier willingly came for medical treatment, and a large one at that.

"Really? I am surprised you sustained any injuries under all that armor. Okay, just slip out of your armor and sit on the table. I will get my equipment and a medical gown for you."

"It may take awhile for me to take off my armor." Chief informed the doctor.

"That is alright. It will be hard for me to find a gown for someone as big as a Krogan." Dr. Chakwas said who started to dig through the drawers and cabinets in the medical room.

John-117 began removing parts of his armor as Cortana helped by undoing some locks, while talking with each other.

"Do you think they will examine the armor and find you?" He asked.

"Don't worry, I will power myself down along with the suit. They won't find anything. Besides after what you have done to three of their crew members, do you really think they will want to piss off a Spartan?" Cortana answered jokingly with confidence.

After a ten minute process of undoing the locks in his armor and removing the combat skin under the MJOLNIR armor, Chief sat on the medical table naked, but he waited patiently for Dr. Chakwas. After awhile, Master Chief felt like someone was watching him. He turned

slightly to look out the windows of the medical lab to see that many Cerberus women were staring at him in some sort of trance. Some of their mouths were open while a few didn't even blink. John-117 was not sure what to do. Being stared at by others was nothing new, but this situation was very different.

****_In Miranda Lawson's Office_****

Miranda was on her computer, sending a few reports to the Illusive Man. As she was finishing her report, Mess Sergeant Gardner came through her door.

"Uh, Miss Lawson we uh, kind of got a situation in the mess hall." Gardner said nervously. Reporting bad news to someone with the name Ice Queen was not something to look forward to.

"What is it?" Miranda asked in a rather hateful tone when she tore her eyes away from her computer.

"You might want to uh see for yourself."

Miranda sighed and got up from her chair,

"This better be good Mess Sergeant." She warned as she walked to the mess hall.

Gardner followed her while exhaling a breath of relief for just getting a mean tone from Miss Lawson. Miranda left her office and entered the mess hall and scanned the area for anything strange. She looked to see many women staring through the window of Dr. Chakwas medical lab. She stomped up to the females.

"What are you girls doing?" Miranda shouted, but did not get a reply, "Just what is so damn important?"

Miranda didn't finish as she saw what captured their eyes. Before her was John sitting on a medical table, naked. Miranda lost her train of thought and stared at Master Chief just like the other women. Chief had a very interesting body, he was very pale just like his face, he had scars on his body that look like they came from a different variety of weapons, and he was also incredibly muscular. She stood there for a few minutes with an open mouth, but then Gardner tapped on her shoulder,

"Uh Miss Lawson, the um situation?"

Miranda shook her head roughly, snapping her out of her trance.

"Uh... yeah, ladies! Get back to work or I will personally kick you off this ship in space with my own foot!"

The Cerberus women woke up from their own respective trances and start scrambling to their posts.

Miranda smirked at the chaos she just caused, something she usually enjoyed. But before she went back to her office, the Cerberus Officer took a second glance at the Spartan. John was looking right at her too. It seemed like Chief was trying to talk to her unfortunately she couldn't hear him, but she did read his lips. His lips said two

simple words,

"Thank you."

Miranda nodded her head at him with a little smile on her face. She walked back to her office with heels clicking to the floor, and a small blush on her face that she did not know she had.

****_Back in the medical lab_****

Chief turned his attention back to the front of him. He was very thankful that Miranda was able to get the women away, all that staring made him feel a little strange since he was naked. The Cerberus Officer always seemed to know what she was doing and how to do it, a very unique talent he could respect.

Dr. Chakwas came back in with a large white gown in her arms.

"Here we go. It took awhile, but I think I found one that might fit. Anything interesting happen while I was gone?" the Cerberus doctor asked.

The Spartan shook his head.

Dr. Chakwas got a full look at his body before the gown was on.

"My, my, look at those scars. They say that each scar has a story behind it, and by looking at you I can tell you must have some interesting stories."

"Not much ma'am." Chief answered though his whole life had many tales.

"I trust my armor will be untouched when this is over." Chief said, changing his expression on his face, while slipping the medical gown on.

"Don't worry Spartan, nothing will happen to your belongings." Dr. Chakwas said as she applied some medi-gel to the super soldier.

Dr. Chakwas stuck an IV in his muscular arm along with a heavy dose of sedatives.

Master Chief was awake longer than a normal human would have lasted, but eventually he dozed off. The doctor was satisfied at her work, she was able to knock out a super soldier without getting a scratch on her. She laughed a little at the thought of that joke.

Suddenly a beep then came from her terminal. Dr. Chakwas went over and checked to see what was on the computer. She received a message from Miranda Lawson. On the message it said,

Send the results.

Dr. Chakwas replied where she said she will. Though Chakwas was a medic, she had orders to follow for Cerberus. The doctor brought her attention back to the unconscious Spartan and began treating his wounds.

"_Wow! Plasma damage, high powered laser damage, and many other

wounds, this guy has been through it all. It is amazing he is still even alive, let alone able to fight."

After fully treating his injuries, she started the examination. It took a few minutes, but she received some satisfying results.

"Oh my." Dr Chakwas said out loud, but not loud enough to wake a sleeping tank.

The Cerberus medic went back to her computer and sent the results to Miranda Lawson.

****_Miranda Lawson's office_****

Miranda Lawson was once again on her computer typing some reports. Earlier she sent the videos she downloaded of the Master Chief from _Purgatory_ to the Illusive Man, and still awaited a reply from him. As she worked she got a message about the Spartan's body examination. She opened the message and read it.

The electrical activity in the Chief's nervous system was higher than usual. Nervous system is no longer bioelectrical. It has been almost completely replaced with some sort of superconducting fibers. It means he will have an extremely fast reaction time. Nearly five times faster than a trained soldier.

I performed some X-rays as well. His bones are extremely dense, they have some sort of metal coating. They seem impossible to break. I attempted to retrieve a sample, but it was unsuccessful. Also I will need a new drill.

There is higher blood flow in the eyes, higher visual acuity. He can see farther than any human and pretty good in the dark.

His muscle density is abnormally dense, so he is far stronger than he seems. His strength far outmatches a Krogan, though I am sure you got to see that for yourself when he threw a YMIR mech.

He has an overactive metabolism, so he does not require that much sleep. This also means his body will always stay fit.

There is something wrong with his thyroid gland, but the analysis is not complete. There are some other things, but like I said analysis is not complete.

End Report

P.S. Don't forget about the drill.

The Cerberus officer closed the message and thought deeply on the super soldier.

"_So the data he sent was right, he is heavily augmented." _Miranda let out a little smirk on realizing how much common ground they truly had.

"_So some of those scars on his body are from his surgeries. They must have been excruciatingly painful. Oh, that body! Uh! Snap out of it! You are not some horny school girl!" She_ thought to herself.

Miranda got back to her computer and sent a message back to the doctor.

"_Is he still need in there? I would like to have a word with him."_

"_No, he woke up earlier than he should of. He grabbed his things and went back to his quarters."_

"_Right, overactive metabolism." _Miranda answered herself mentally.

"_Thank you, Dr. Chakwas." _Miss Lawson sent thus ending the conversation.

Miranda brought up images of the Spartan in combat aboard the Purgatory, the data he sent about his universe, and now his medical records. She couldn't deny her interest in the Master Chief. He held so much information, possessed such fascinating technology, and appeared nearly unstoppable in combat. But a small part of her couldn't believe that there was another like her, besides her sister.

She got up from her chair and walked out of her office and proceeded to the elevator.

****_Few minutes later_****

Miranda stepped into the cargo bay and saw the Master Chief, fully armored. He appeared to be tinkering with his guns, though they looked different from the ones he used on the _Purgatory_. They were grey and a little bulkier, almost more human like.

"I received your medical reports." Miranda said as she walked towards the Spartan.

"And?" Chief simply said.

"And you were right. You are heavily augmented, though we were able to find out what some of those augmentations were. I was also right, we do have a few things in common."

John remembered back to the talk from earlier about her life and her own augmentations,

"So, we were designed to perfect."

Miranda sat down in front of the super soldier and eyed him, though he still messed with his weaponry.

"We are not perfect, John. Both of us make mistakes, we are human."

Spartan-117 broke away from his gun and brought his gaze to Miss Lawson. She said he was human, something he did not expect from her. In his universe people, namely the ODST, would sometimes mock Spartans, calling them cyborgs, freaks, or other names. Miranda, a cold woman was one of the few to call him human. John then said two words to Miss Lawson,

"Thank you."

"For what?"

"For calling me human."

"I know some of the pressure and responsibilities that being augmented comes with. Remember I've gone through the same thing." Miranda said as she recalled her own harsh childhood.

Chief stared into Miranda's eyes and saw something that he was vaguely familiar with, comfort.

Before any of them could say another word EDI's voice rang,

"Miss Lawson Shepard is done with his mission and he has brought a 'package' that will require attention. You will need to meet him in the comm. room."

"Thanks EDI." Miranda said and then looked back to the Spartan,

"We can finish this talk some other time." The officer said as she got up and exited the cargo bay.

"Yeah." Master Chief replied.

****_Few minutes later Normal POV_****

After securing the tank inside the cargo bay and interfacing the controls with EDI to prevent any mishaps, Shepard swiftly made his way to Deck 2 and the comm room.

As he reached the door, he could hear Miranda talking to Jacob.

"Bringing the Krogan aboard for study makes sense, but I still have concerns about waking it."

"Yeah, you've said that a few times now," Jacob said with a touch of exasperation.

Stepping into the room, Shepard stopped at the head of the table and leaned on it. But Miranda continued her tirade.

"A normal Krogan is dangerous. This one was created, and likely educated, by a madman."

Shepard decided to try and ease the tension.

"There's no way he is getting out unless one of us lets him out." The ex Spectre said with his arms folded across his chest.

"Or unless Okeer installed some sort of failsafe. Or a malfunction cause the tank to shutdown." Miranda pointed out.

"I'm not saying we take a crowbar to it right now, but I'm not giving up a potential resource." Shepard argued.

"It's your decision Commander. Just be careful." Miranda

warned.

"Noted." Shepard quickly responded and unfolded his arms, "The cargo hold is safe enough while I decide what to do with him."

Miranda casually walked out and Jacob shrugged his shoulders and then followed.

Shepard stood there alone in the room, deep within concentration. He needed to at least see the Krogan, to make a better decision on whether to release him or not.

"Maybe I should pay this super Krogan a visit."

****_Down in the Port Cargo Area_****

"EDI, status," Shepard called out as the door closed behind him.

"The subject is stable, Commander. Integration with onboard systems was seamless," she reported.

Looking up into the tank, the former Spectre saw that the Krogan's eyes were open, but were not blinking or moving.

"Can he see anything in there? Does he know where he is?"

"Unlikely. Current neural patterns indicate minimal cognition. Barring ship-wide power loss, the nutrients in the tank could sustain him for over a year."

"What can you tell me about this guy? Anything unusual?" Shepard asked, he was curious why Okeer would call this his 'perfect legacy'.

"The subject is an exceptional example of the Krogan species, with fully formed primary, secondary, and tertiary organs, where applicable. No defects of any kind, aside from the genetic markers of the genophage present in all Krogan. I cannot judge mental functioning," EDI listed off.

"So we have no idea how dangerous this guy is aside from the obvious?"

"He is a Krogan, Commander. If you are asking whether he is actively hostile, I don't have the necessary data to answer," she informed.

"Any guesses then?" Shepard asked.

"Okeer's technology could impart data, not methods of thinking. The subject may know of his views, but would not necessarily share them."

The N7 marine stood there, deep in thought, with his concentration heavily upon on the consequences of releasing the tank bred Krogan. True that most Krogan were naturally violent and could not be trusted easily. But there was also all the data the Krogan contained, and the potential for him to become a weapon to use against the Collectors.

"Very well. Stand by. I'm going to open the tank and let him out," Shepard decisively said.

"Cerberus protocol is very clear regarding untested alien technology," EDI informed.

"I'm not Cerberus, EDI," Shepard responded. "I don't care about their rules and protocols. And I won't be second guessed on my own ship, by my own ship. He's either a powerful addition to the crew or a time bomb. I'd rather deal with it now."

"Very well, Shepard," EDI complied. "The controls are online. The switch â€" and consequences â€" are yours," she warned.

The former Spectre approached the console and with two taps, the nutrient fluid inside the tank began draining. The Commander took a few steps back to better see what he was about to deal with.

The moment liquid finished draining, the pod moved slightly forward to eject its occupant as the doors opened. The Krogan blinked once before falling to his knees and coughed out some of the viscous nutrient fluid right at Shepard's feet.

Taking another step back, Shepard looks watched the Krogan in front of him that was now awake.

****_Krogan's POV_****

Taking a deep breath, his eyes finally focused in the bright light of the room he was in. He had no name. He had no identity. All he had were words and memories that he didn't care about. But he was free from the tank. Anything else could come after.

Looking down from the tank, he saw a human standing before him. The nameless Krogan blinked a few times and then made a glare with his face. Letting out a roar, he charged the human and picked him up, before slamming him against the wall and pinning the human. The human male let out a grunt, but still turned his head to meet the Krogan's unnatural blue eyes unflinchingly.

"Human. Male. Before you die, I need a name," the Krogan rumbled evenly.

"I'm Commander Shepard and I don't take threats lightly. I suggest that you relax." The human glared as he answered.

"Not your name. Mine," the tank born Krogan corrected the Commander Shepard. "I am trained, I know things, but the tankâ€| Okeer couldn't implant connection. His words are hollow."

Words flashed through his head.

"Warlord, legacy, gruntâ€| grunt. 'Grunt' was among the last. It has no meaning. It'll do." Holding his arm against the human's throat, "I am Grunt. If you are worthy of your command, prove your strength and try to destroy me."

"You wouldn't prefer Okeer? Or Legacy?" the human asked a question or rather a preference,

"It's short. Matches the training in my blood. The other words are big things I don't feel. Maybe they fit your mouth better. I feel nothing for Okeer's clan or his enemies. I will do what I am bred to do-fight and determine the strongest- but his imprint has failed. He has failed. Without a reason that's mine, one fight is as good as any other. Might as well start with you," he growled.

"I have a good ship and a strong crew, a strong clan. You'd make it stronger." Shepard bargained.

Grunt thought about his situation and the story behind the Commander Shepard,

"If you're weak, and choose weak enemies. I'll have to kill you."

"Our enemies are worthy. No doubt about that." Shepard replied confidently.

"Hmph! That'sâ€¦| acceptable," Grunt said. "I'll fight for you."

He saw Shepard smile. He had negotiated with a Krogan and survived.

****Normal POV****

"I'm glad you saw reason," Shepard said as he pressed the barrel of his pistol on Grunt's belly.

"Hmm?" Grunt quickly looked down to see a pistol aimed at his stomach.

"Ha! Offer one hand, but arm the other," Grunt said, voicing his thoughts out loud and letting the human down.

"Wise, Shepard." Grunt almost smiled. "If I find a clan, if I find what Iâ€¦|" Grunt hesitated as he drew a blank. He still felt no desire beyond combat. No desires of his own. "What I want, I will be honored to eventually pit them against you," he finished.

Shepard merely nodded.

"We'll see what happens, but I'm sure it'll be interesting."

Grunt turned away and began to survey the room he was in. It was small, metallic, and clean. Similar to his tank, but bigger

Suddenly, the door slid opened with a hiss to reveal Master Chief at the doorway.

The Spartan cast his golden visor around the room, to see what caused the loud noise he'd heard from the room. His eyes instantly fell upon the gun in Shepard's hand that was aimed at the Krogan. John was quick to summarize that the alien reptile was hostile and needed to be neutralized.

Chief sprung into action as he swiftly delivered a fist to the Krogan's gut, which caused it to lose its breath. It was followed by

a hefty punch to the alien reptile's hump, bringing the creature to the floor. He had hoped to finish the Krogan off, so he raised his boot to the alien's head like he had to countless Covenant species.

Only for Shepard to stop him.

"Hold on, Chief!" Shepard exclaimed and held his hands up, "He is on our side."

Confused, John-117 glanced over to the former Spectre.

"Commander I saw hiâ€|"

"He is a Krogan that just woke up from the tube. He was only reacting, just like you did." Shepard interrupted and brought into account when they had first found the Spartan.

Master Chief looked down at the Krogan, and with hesitation let the alien get back up.

Grunt coughed a bit and wiped the blood away from his mouth, but then he started to laugh.

"If he is in your clan then no doubt our enemies are strong." Grunt faced the Master Chief, with a vicious Krogan battle smile, "You were able to take me down. You are strong like a Krogan, there is some honor in you. I am anxious to fight with you, and even more to fight against you once more."

The Spartan nodded towards Shepard, ignoring Grunt, and returned back to his room.

"Wow Chief, you really crashed the party. Well at least it wasn't as bad when you met the other three crew members." Cortana then teased in his armor. "Let's hurry and get back to the room. I wanna learn more about the omni-tools and these Krogan."

John-117 didn't reply, but merely walked back to his quarters.

****A Few Moments Later in the Cargo Bay ****

The Master Chief sat at the table in the cargo bay, fully armored as per usual. The seat was well reinforced, where it could hold even beyond an adult Krogan's weight.

The Spartan was examining another one of the mass effect weapons. It was a Turian weapon called the Phaeston. The gun greatly reminded him of the MA5B series assault rifle from his universe. The Phaeston reassembled it in appearance and even had a large clip size like it. He missed using the UNSC weaponry, they felt more natural to him rather than the Covenant.

He was brought out of his concentration when his AI spoke up.

"These omni-tool are fascinating!" Cortana was currently looking at a model of an omni-tool as well as what it could do, "It has so many functions and abilities, we could do several things with it. We can make repairs, hack systems, it even has a flashlight, and so much more. We can definitely use one of these back in UNSC space." Cortana

said with glee as she controlled the tool.

"It could be useful back home." John-117 agreed.

"Maybe you should talk with Shepard or Miranda about getting one. Speak of the devil, turn around; you got company."

Master Chief looked over his shoulder to see Commander Shepard had walked in.

Cortana hushed herself, while Chief stood up and faced the Blitz Hero.

"Commander," the super soldier simply stated.

"Chief, I was hoping to talk to you."

"Is there something you need?"

"I wanted to make sure you are comfortable with a Krogan. You didn't exactly have a good first impression."

John-117 nodded his head, earning a small smile of satisfaction from Shepard.

"That's great, we will need both of you for the Collectors."

"Understood."

Suddenly EDI's feminine voice, sounded over the intercom.

"Spartan-117, the Illusive Man would like to speak to you."

Instead of responding to the A.I, Chief looked at Shepard, who sighed in annoyance.

"I knew this was coming eventually. Perfect... just perfect." Shepard said sarcastically, while he pinched his eyes together with his fingers.

The super soldier silently glanced at the former Spectre, acknowledging Shepard's attitude towards the Cerberus leader. He had a good hunch that the Commander had some disdain towards the Illusive Man.

"Trust me, you won't like it. Let's go and get this over with," The Blitz hero continued.

Both Master Chief and Shepard left the room and walked towards the elevator.

"The Illusive Man is the head of operations with Cerberus, and this mission against the Collectors. He claims that he believes in the advancement of humanity, but he would sacrifice anyone for his twisted experiments. When I was in the Alliance, I even stopped some of his work on creating shock troops. He holds all the cards in the deck, but he hides behind smoke and mirrors. Don't underestimate him, the Illusive Man is very smart, and will use his intelligence to get

under your skin."

The more Chief heard about this Illusive Man, the more he compared him to an ONI agent. Sly, smart, secretive, so far, he fit the bill perfectly for them. Still he needed to know every detail about the Cerberus leader.

"Anything else?" The super soldier asked, following the Commander into the elevator.

Shepard smirked and pressed the button for second floor.

"How about I tell you about some of his private operations I busted when I was hunting for Saren." The Blitz hero let out before the elevator doors closed.

****With the Illusive Man _Location: Unknown_****

Sitting in his chair, the Illusive Man held a fresh cigarette loosely in his right hand between his index and middle finger, with a drink in his left. Surrounding him were holographic monitors with various medical charts sent from Dr Chakwas, detailing reports written by Miranda Lawson, and video images from the prison ship, Purgatory. What all of the information had in common was that it dealt with the super soldier, Spartan-117.

He took a puff from his lit cigarette, while watching the recordings of the Master Chief catching a FENRIS mech by the throat.

When he had first glanced at the large bulky armor, he guessed that he was looking at a new model of a mech. He nearly coughed up his scotch when the information told him otherwise. Saying that he was intrigued by the augmented man would be an understatement. Earlier he thought that Shepard was the best hope for humanity, a hero. But now... now there was the Spartan. True, that Shepard was a symbol, but the Spartan was a soldier. He thought there was one man, Shepard, who might be what stands between humanity and the greatest threat of their brief existence, the Reapers. And now there might be two.

The Illusive Man pushed aside an image of Chief standing over six dead bodies of Blue Sun Turians, impaled with yellow spikes. He got a sick enjoyment at seeing the species that brought him so much pain in the past, now dead on the floor and killed by a human. To him, it was a form of justice.

This Master Chief was the perfect example of what humanity could achieve. It was something that Cerberus strived for in their endless pursuit of advancing the human race. There was so much that he could accomplish with the super soldier in his ranks.

He saved the footage of Chief ramming a Batarian and a Turian, sending their mangled bodies flying. He wanted to analyze every intel personally, such data will be invaluable in future research.

The Spartan was living proof of how powerful a human could become physically. A solution to outmatch even a Krogan in strength or a Drell in speed.

TIM smirked at the visual of the green goliath smashing a Turian's skull with the strange blue curved gun. To see a weapon that appeared

so delicate, and then to watch the Spartan crack a skull with it was very interesting. All the more reason to obtain the advanced technology.

The super soldier was the tool they needed to combat any alien menace, and usurp man's power. The large step they needed to overpower the Citadel races.

He treasured the video of Master Chief killing a Batarian with his bizarre rifle. To see such an extraordinary equipment that could vaporize an enemy so easily was astounding. The soldier's arsenal had to be added within Cerberus' armory. With those weapons, even the Geth would be put to shame.

The Spartan was the symbol humans needed to gain their place in the galaxy. The epitome of his paramilitary group's dreams and desire.

The Illusive Man studied the recording of Chief wrestling with the YMIR mech. It was his favorite out of all of them. To see a man to go toe-to-toe with a hulking machine, and then beat it was absolutely fascinating. Something no sentient species has managed until now.

TIM took a sip from his scotch, while deep in thought. He spent a vast amount of Cerberus' funds and resources on the Lazarus Project to revive Shepard. Spending such wealth on the Citadel hero, had put his organization back by a few years, but it was well worth it. And now he had found the ultimate super soldier in cryosleep aboard a derelict vessel floating randomly in deep space. He didn't even spend a quarter of the money on finding the Spartan, than he did with Shepard. It seemed that Lady Luck has smiled in his favor.

It was then that a low whistle sang, signalling that his communication projection was activating. The Illusive Man took the bud of his cigarette in his mouth, with a strong inhale, enjoying the bitter taste of the tobacco.

A flickering holographic image began to materialise, starting with the knees and ending with the tip of the helmet, revealing the person he has been observing.

The Cerberus leader lifted the cigarette from his mouth, knowing that he would have to greet his guest.

"Master Chief," he said plainly, exhaling his smoke.

"Illusive Man," the augmented soldier parroted him, standing still like a stone statue.

As soon as the light reached past his eyes, the Spartan no longer saw the communications room. Instead John-117 saw a very large dark room with tall foreboding shadows created by the star directly in front of him.

Immediately drawing his attention, however was the figure sitting in front of him.

The head of Cerberus: The Illusive Man.

Chief studied the Illusive Man and the room, trying to gain what information he could. The second he laid his eyes on the elderly man, his gut stirred uncomfortably in his stomach, telling him to watch out for the Cerberus leader.

The room was dark, almost pitch black, but there was a light that illuminated from a star behind the Illusive Man. The star burned with a beautiful, yet prophetic glow of an angry red surrounded by a serene blue, each vying for dominance. Unfortunately it also created a rather powerful shadow that obscured most of the Cerberus CEO's physical details.

The Spartan could still make out details such as the silver hair that dominated the Illusive Man's head and he was immaculately dressed in an expensive designer suit. What really caught his attention was the strange blue glowing patterns within the man's unnatural eyes. He could guess that they were implants of some variation.

The Illusive Man tapped his cigarette into the ash tray on the left side of his chair,

"I've waited a long time to meet with you. I'm glad we finally got the opportunity." he said while his facial features were calm, cool, and clinical.

Instead of replying, Chief stood there in a hushed demeanor.

The mute response, irked the Cerberus leader somewhat, but he expected his stoic attitude after reading the reports from Miss Lawson.

"Miranda told me you were a strong silent type," he took another puff from his smoke and then continued, "But I believe your actions speak louder than words. I've seen what you did on Purgatory, it was very impressive. We could use someone of your talents at Cerberus."

Finally, he got a reaction from the Spartan, but it was not a pleasant one.

"I will never work for your organization. I was trained to hunt terrorists like you."

The Illusive Man kept his emotionless and business like expression and replied.

"Terrorist? No doubt that Shepard has talked with you. Cerberus isn't as evil as you believe. You and I are on the same side; we just have different methods."

"Your 'methods' are what I have a problem with. You captured and experimented on innocent humans and killed Alliance marines."

The Cerberus leader summed up that Shepard must have told him about the time he foiled some of Cerberus activities on creating shock troopers from creepers and rachni. No doubt that the Spartan will make it very difficult for him to join his organization, but he couldn't help but to respect the Master Chief's resistance. He took another sip from his scotch, and explained his past actions.

"All were necessary sacrifices. I don't expect you to understand, but they were all used for a common goal that we both believe in; the advancement and preservation of humanity."

Unfortunatley, the Master Chief knew all too well what he meant. In fact it was what his entire life was about. From being captured as a child, and then augmented to become what he was today, a super soldier for the human race. Suddenly, he was brought out of his thoughts when the Illusive Man continued.

"I suppose I'll just have to find a way to change your mind." he said, grinning wickedly.

With those parting words, the Illusive Man ended any further comments with the press of a button.

Just like that, the link was cut and John saw that he was back in the Normandy's comm room. The cylindrical scanner retracted into the floor and the table rose back up in its place in front of the Spartan. His thoughts drifted to what the Cerberus leader said on trying to change his mind.

"And people say I've got a big head. Be careful Chief, I wouldn't trust that megalomaniac even for a minute." Cortana brought inside the MJOLNIR armor.

"Were you able to get a fix on his location?"

"Negative, there was some strange interference, which I assume it's from that star. I picked up on some faint transmissions and broadcasts, but they were pretty quiet. I'm guessing the Illusive Man doesn't want to be found."

"Any ideas?"

"If we got a lot closer to their base or even knew anything about that star, I could track him. I think we should take care of the Collectors first, one problem at a time."

Master Chief turned and left the comm room, only to find Shepard leaning against the wall on the other side, arms folded across his chest.

"How did it go?" the ex-Spectre asked.

"The Illusive Man tried to convince me to join Cerberus; I said no."

A small smile tugged on Shepard's face, and then picked himself off the wall. He was very glad that the Master Chief denied the Illusive Man's offer. He didn't want to eventually fight against the Spartan, if he didn't make the Cerberus CEO happy.

"Nice job, Chief, I'm glad to hear that. Just be careful around the Illusive Man, you can never trust him."

"Affirmative," John-117 nodded his head.

The Master Chief then turned and made his way back to the elevator.

Meanwhile, the former Spectre let out a long waited sigh of relief.

"That went better than I expected," He said more to himself.

Shepard wasn't very sure what Chief had said when he met the Cerberus leader, but since nobody in particular is disowned or dying, it must haven't been that bad. What he did know was that the Illusive Man had certain ways of informing him, and one of them was by email.

The Commander strolled near the galaxy map, where Yeoman Kelly Chambers was stationed. Despite not being an actual fighter like his squadmates, Miss Chambers had a very important role aboard the Normandy for keeping Shepard's head on his shoulders.

"Hey, Kelly," he greeted casually.

"Hello, Commander," she replied in her usual optimism.

"Is there anything I should know?"

"You have unread messages at your private terminal."

"Thanks," he answered in appreciation.

Shepard walked to his terminal, right next to the galaxy map. He clicked open his account and scrolled through his emails patiently. He didn't find any that mentioned of the conversation yet, but it was in fact very recent; he may have to wait longer. He did however find one that caught his eye, it mentioned recruiting another person at the Citadel.

"Commander," he tore his eyes away from his terminal and redirected them to the ships unofficial psychologist, "I don't know what to feel about Grunt. My psych reports were for Okeer. We have no guarantees that Grunt is mentally stable. I get the feeling he just doesn't care about anything, including who lives or dies."

True that the young Krogan was an unexpected replacement to the crew, as well as a loose cannon, but he felt confident enough that he could keep him in check. He did have some first hand experience with a Krogan teammate with Wrex after all.

"Don't worry, I'll keep an eye on him. Plus look at this way, this will be your chance to get a profile on a young Krogan," he reassured.

Kelly brought her thumb up to her lip and thought what her commanding officer said. He had a very good point as hardly anybody could learn from an adolescent Krogan, because of the genophage.

"Hmmm, I haven't thought about that way. Thanks, Commander! Will there be anything else you need?"

"That will be all for now," Shepard confirmed.

He turned on his heel and walked away, but not before he heard the yeoman say,

"I'll be here if you need me."

At the moment, he was heading towards the bridge to tell Joker and EDI where to go next to recruit another potential squad member. From what he read on her, she had stealth and infiltration skills that would prove vital to the Collector mission.

As soon as Shepard was behind the pilot's chair, Joker spun around to face him automatically. Either Joker heard the former Spectre walk up behind him, or he had grown use to the Commander chatting with him after every mission.

"You collect stray cats as a kid? Because we really needed a mega-Krogan, so thanks for dragging him home." Joker jibbed.

Shepard brushed the comment off and got down to business, with the most recent dossier in mind.

"EDI, set a course for the Citadel. We have a master thief to recruit."

****End of chapter****

7. Chapter 7

****I FINALLY FINISHED THE CHAPTER!****

****I can believe that I am finally done with this chapter, it took so long to write and perfect. Sorry for the long wait, but I have been incredibly busy with school, getting ready for college stuff, video games and other stuff. So to make up for the really long wait, I wrote a really long chapter. The chapter is huge and the longest one I have ever written, it is over 27,000 words! That is a big deal for me since I spent a huge amount time working in this chapter.****

****IMPORTANT NOTICE! I have set up a voting poll on my profile on who should Commander Shepard be paired up with in this story. So if you have a certain lady that you want to see with Shepard, go and vote! I imagine some people's vote might change since Mass Effect 3 came out.****

****Now I have been receiving some messages and comments on who should Master Chief be paired up with? Well, don't worry I have a few plans for our favorite Spartan to get paired up. It will most likely be a love triangle. If you have any ideas or suggestions then feel free to tell me, so we can discuss it about happening or something.****

****This chapter wouldn't have been possible if it weren't from the brilliant minds of these brilliant authors: Freedom Guard, PhoenixFanatic999, Kaijudospartan, and Sysero of Cain. They have helped me through so much through my stories. They are great writers with a lot of talent.****

****Now in this chapter I have told a few parts from the POV from a few enemy characters. I was wanting to experiment to write from a bad guys point of view (which is kind of fun) and write what it the character thinks or act like when they face tough, important characters like Shepard, Master Chief or any other squad member**

aboard the Normandy. I hope you like it and I would appreciate some feedback on how I wrote the characters and how they acted and if you would want to see more parts told from the POV of some more bad guys. I probably won't write from the POV from enemy characters a lot in stories though.**

I did change a minor thing about Kasumi's loyalty mission. Instead of going through of the garage and fighting Hock, I made it where Shepard, Chief, and Kasumi have to have a huge battle against Hock's troops, mechs, and a super tough Asari Commando, before they fight Hock. So the fight and the size of certain rooms are all that is really changed. I hope you can read them easily and I hope you also like it.

Mass Effect 3 has also been keeping me busy. The game is extremely awesome! Unfortunately I need to start over because I accidentally lock-in in a relationship with someone I didn't want to be with on the game, that is a huge fault in the game. Now I have not beat the game yet, so don't spoil it for me! I am one of those people that takes the game at a slow pace, achieve everything, get everything, and have the perfect ending of the game. Going slow on a game really gets me into the game and makes it a lot more fun and emotional. So I don't want no spoilers. I have been hearing that the ending is really disappointing though. If the ending is really disappointing then I am sure that Bioware will change the ending through downloadable content like what happened on Fallout 3. It just may take awhile for it to happen though.

Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to Bungie or 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware. Enjoy the chapter.

Chapter 7: Master Chief and Master Thief

Zakera Ward, Citadel

The Kodiak shuttle descended in the Zakera Ward of the Citadel. It dropped off Shepard and three of his squad mates. Accompanying Shepard was Garrus, Master Chief, and their newest recruit; Grunt. They came to the Citadel to recruit a master thief for the suicide mission, the only problem was that she was nowhere in sight. All the squad could see were humans, Turians, and other species walking around.

Grunt growled.

"Shepard, I don't see the thief anywhere."

"She is a thief, she probably doesn't want to be found," Garrus pointed out which made Grunt growl a little louder.

Though on the surface of the team that Shepard had brought what looked like a power house team that was suited for an all out war, he'd actually he brought them to help look for the master thief. The ex-Spectre knew the thief would not easily be found so he brought some of his best reconnaissance commandos.

Garrus was part of the team because he was an expert sniper and had a targeting visor to help spot their soon-to-be new recruit. Garrus was trained to spot targets and eliminate targets from afar, even ones

that were in-hiding and heavily camouflaged.

The Master Chief had his own training to spot enemy troops that were hiding and in cover. The Spartan has his advance heads up display in his helmet, which allowed him to see far better than any normal human in every way and, as an all rounded soldier, was also trained to search for targets in a crowd.

And Gruntâ€¦ well, Grunt was actually brought along to determine his reaction to crowds, open places and general public. If all went well, Shepard would trust him enough to bring him out on more excursions in the future. Shepard sent a discrete look to his right to see how the young tank born Krogan was faring.

Grunt would turn his head left and right, keeping to his objective of finding the master thief, but at the same time, glares were pointed at seemingly random people, or growls were sent in their direction. Shepard could tell that Grunt would much prefer to shoot someone rather than talk to them, but all Krogan were like that.

The Spartan must have been faring no better than Grunt, because though the Commander could not see through Chief's polarized visor, he could sense or guess that Chief was very uncomfortable in the crowd full of non-humans. After fighting in nearly a thirty-year war with a religious faction full of non-humans that killed men, women, and children ruthlessly, then one would expect the super-soldier to be a little xenophobic. Shepard could not blame him, as with all of the nasty encounters with the Batarians such as the Blitz, he himself kind of disliked most of the Batarian population.

Hopefully after a period of time and a talk, then maybe the Master Chief could feel a little more comfortable with a non-human. Though Shepard suspected that would take a while, even if Chief made a conscious effort to get over his alien socialisation problem. Scars like his couldn't be mended in just a few days.

Shepard looked around more until he saw something out of the ordinary. The Commander spotted an advertising terminal, but it had a hooded Asian female's face on it. The terminal then spoke.

"Commander Shepard, enter the password and receive a free gift!"

Shepard and company walk up to the terminal to speak to it. Unbeknownst to them that a feminine figure in skin tight black and white clothes with a hood appeared out of thin air, above Shepard on a railing. She also had a pink/purple lipstick mark on her lower lip. She pulled up her Omni-tool, tapping several buttons to trigger the next phase of the programming.

Back with Shepard and his team. Garrus was a little nervous, after the last time he talked to a woman on a terminal he wound up being thrashed by a formerly frozen super-soldier.

"Watch what you say, Shepard. I don't wanna be jumped again by another war machine, I am still sore from the last time." Garrus then looked at Master Chief, who glanced back at the Turian blankly. "No offense."

The Spartan just shrugged his shoulders, while Grunt chuckled as he understood what Garrus was talking about.

"I wish I was there to see that." Grunt said with another chuckle.

Shepard shook his head and focused at the situation in front of him.

"Please tell me your password, Commander Shepard." The terminal said.

Shepard thought about it, but then remembered the password given to him by the Illusive Man on the email.

"Silence is Golden." He said in a monotone voice.

"Good to finally meet you, Commander Shepard. Kasumi Goto, I'm a fan." The terminal introduced itself with more enthusiasm.

"Has Cerberus filled you in on the mission?" The Commander asked wanting it to be clear to Kasumi to know what she was signing up for.

"Honestly, I'm surprised they didn't come to me sooner. My fault for being hard to find I guess."

While Shepard was talking with Kasumi through the terminal, Cortana made her own little discovery.

"Chief, look up sixty degrees at three o'clock. I think we found our thief." murmured Cortana in the enclosed environment of the MJOLNIR helmet.

John obeyed and looked up to see the face on the terminal on the railing above them. The thief must have felt his eyes on her, because she looked away from her Omni-tool and looked at him. Kasumi smirked and gave the super-soldier a wave. The Spartan doesn't respond to the wave, but merely stared at her.

"I wonder how she got up there?" Cortana said in John's helmet.

She hadn't noticed anything that would allow easy access to the railing.

"Commander." Chief alerted Shepard with his gravelly voice.

Shepard looked at the Spartan and then followed his line of gaze. The ex-Spectre spotted the thief known as Kasumi Goto. Kasumi then pointed at the terminal with her finger, gesturing to look at the terminal. Shepard reluctantly turned at the terminal once more.

"Sorry Commander, but I need you to look at the terminal. I don't want the civilians to see me." Kasumi said through the terminal.

Kasumi then looked at the Spartan. Miss Goto was struck speechless as she had never seen this man in armor before, and the guy was huge...about the height of a Krogan... if he was even a human. Or was

it a human formed mech? She wondered just who was this guy.

And flanking Shepard was a Turian with some cybernetic implants on a side of his face, and a targeting visor over his right eye. The famous Garrus Vakarian, no doubt. The other was a rarely seen type of Krogan (the rest sounded messy, so I took it out), young and in very advanced and clean armor by Krogan standards.

"_This will be interesting."_ Humming to herself, the woman keyed her omnitool to activate the next part of the terminal's programming.

"So big boy, I would appreciate it if you would stop staring at me unless you wanna come up here and give me a kiss," Kasumi teased the Spartan with a playful smirk.

John-117 did not want to compromise the recruiting mission by simply infuriating the thief, so he turned to look at the terminal once more.

"Thank you," the woman said

Shepard then started to question the thief, so he could get as much info as possible.

"What's with the password and the sneaking around? Are you in trouble or something?" The ex-Spectre asked.

"I'm the best thief in the business, not the most famous. Need to watch my step to keep it that way. I also needed to make sure this was all legit. And I have no doubts now â€" you're the real Commander Shepard," Kasumi said, as the terminal's image would flicker a little.

"What brought you to Cerberus?" Shepard asked the common question to most of his newest recruits.

"That's a bit of a story. Short version, they were looking for me, so I trailed them to find out why. Turns out they were looking for someone to join you on an important missionâ€" and were offering a serious signing bonus. I had a thing I needed help with, so we made a deal. And here we are," Kasumi informed Shepard.

"I assume this deal is something I should know about." Shepard said as he was in the dark on the so called 'deal'. He was a little mad that the Illusive Man hadn't fill him in, but was not that surprised as the Illusive Man was not very trusting.

"Yeah, I guess it slipped their minds. I'm looking for my old partner's graybox. A man named Donovan Hock took it, and I'm planning to get it back."

"What's this heist you are planning?"

"Not here, Shepard. You'll get a briefing when the time comes, but I'll nail down the details, anyway. I've taken the liberty of getting you some evening wear, though. You'll want to look presentable."

"Tell me about this partner of yours."

"His name was Keiji Okuda. The best hacker and entryman I've ever known. Unfortunately, he slipped up and made himself infamous. He stole something he shouldn't. He warned me it was bad, something that could spark interstellar war if it got out. That informationâ€¦ got him killed."

"What could he have found that's so bad?"

"He wouldn't say what it was, just that it was dangerous. He said if it got out, humanity would be in trouble. He encrypted it, wrapped it up in his own memories. To decode the information, you have to sift through all the times we spent together. Now those memories are all that is left of him."

"I can understand why you'd want to get it back." Shepard said, as he now knew that not only was it a mission that could ignite a possible war, but also a personal mission.

"Getting it back will be easier with your help, Shepard." Kasumi said back.

"I assume a graybox is some sort of hardware." Shepard guessed, not knowing what a graybox actually was.

"It's a neural implant, illegal most places. Stores memories, thoughtsâ€¦ secret codes, illicit information. This one in particular belonged to my partner, Keiji Okuda. We worked together for a long time, before Hock killed him." Kasumi said with sadness in her voice.

"What do you know about Donovan Hock?"

"Mr. Hock is a well respected 'business man.'" Kasumi said with disdain. "Arms dealer, murderer, generally not a great guy. His mansion's famous for being hard to crack. But I have a way in, and I think you're going to love it."

"I doubt Hock is the kind of guy who takes kindly to people sneaking into his house." The former Spectre pointed out.

"I always expect trouble. That is why you're here."

"_So she is basically always prepared. That is a good feature, she can come in very handy." _Shepard thought to himself. "If that is what Cerberus promised you, we will get it done."

"It will be fun. And if we're lucky, you won't even have to draw your gun," Kasumi said, trying to be reassuring, though she had her doubts.

She would love to get revenge against Hock, for what he done to Keiji. Kasumi turned and disabled the advertising terminal. Shepard, Garrus, Grunt, and Master Chief turn back to the real Kasumi Goto above them on the railing.

"We should probably wrap this up. You look pretty silly standing there talking to an advertisement." Kasumi said as she looked at the group consisting of a human ex-Spectre in N-7 armor, a Turian with half a cybernetic mouth and a visor on one eye, a young Krogan with

blue eyes, and a giant dark green armored human with a gold reflecting visor and mean looking weapons.

"Good, meet me back on the Normandy." With that said, Shepard and the Normandy commandos start to walk back to the shuttle, though the Spartan turned to look back at the master thief. He did not fully trust a thief when he turned his back to her.

Kasumi smiled and gave the Master Chief a wink,

"See you on the ship big guy."

For a normal human, it would be hard to see the wink under the darkness of Kasumi's hood, but with the augmentation's Chief has received and his visor, it was no problem.

She turned around and activated her tactical cloak, to meet the Commander at the 'Normandy' undetected by authority figures or civilians.

"She is a weird one, Chief." Cortana said inside John's helmet.

****_Back on the Normandy SR-2 _****

Commander Shepard and Cerberus Operative Jacob Taylor were waiting in the Comm./Briefing room to debrief their newest recruit Kasumi Goto. Little did they know that the thief would be debriefing them on her own personal mission.

Garrus Vakarian and Grunt were returning to their posts or rooms as they would call it, and the Master Chief was just doing the same until Miranda Lawson stopped him before he entered the elevator.

"Chief, I believe I could use your help with something." Miranda mentioned, with her hands on her hips in front of the UNSC super-soldier.

The Spartan merely looks at her, but Miranda knew that he was listening.

"I don't fully trust having a master thief on board an important Cerberus vessel like this. I would like for you to watch her as we are debriefing her in the comm. room. I don't want her stealing anything that belongs to Cerberus, and I believe you wouldn't want her stealing any of your equipment either."

John thought about it, but his thoughts were quickly interrupted by Cortana.

"You might want to do it, Chief. She is right, we have our own equipment that is very valuable, and showing the thief how intimidating you can be will teach her to not to mess with our stuff. Besides do you truly have anything that needs to be done, other than rotting in that room?" Cortana pointed out inside John's helmet.

Cortana was right; he had nothing to do except assembling and disassembling weapons, which he had already done, several times.

Luckily when playing security, nobody usually talked to a Spartan but really no one really talked to a Spartan in general. Ironically there was an opposite effect in this universe as quite a few people have tried to speak with him, and few have had gotten a decent conversation with him like Miranda. Miranda Lawson seemed to be the closest thing to a friend that Master Chief actually had in this universe besides Cortana.

"Alright," Chief finally agreed.

Miranda smiled,

"Thanks John."

The Cerberus operative led the Spartan to the Comm/Briefing room. Miranda actually surprised herself back there. She thanked Chief and used his name, something she usually didn't do. She pondered it for a second, but quickly shrugged it off as she had to focus on the event ahead. She would think about it later though as she knew that keeping an eye on Kasumi would be helpful and hopefully the presence of the Spartan would give the thief a good enough warning not to try anything foolish. She was aware that Kasumi had taken Cerberus data in the past and while she had nothing against Kasumi personally, she was not going to let her get the idea that she was going to be allowed to roam around and do who knows what on this ship.

As soon as the two of them entered the Briefing Room, Master Chief and Cortana spotted Kasumi, and John quickly studied the woman. There were all the trademarks of a thief on her, the clothing, while more than enough to turn heads, had the hues needed for urban stealth operations. There was also no doubt in his mind or Cortana's that Kasumi Goto was trained along the lines of not just a thief, but also as an assassin if needed...almost like a ninja, or an ONI field agent. The build also suggested that as she was not too tall, but had the body of an athlete.

He placed that aside as Shepard, Jacob, and Kasumi turned to face both him and Miranda. Shepard was surprised to see John there along with Miranda, Jacob raised his eyebrow a bit as while he was used to seeing Miranda come in when in a briefing was starting, this was the first time she came in with someone by her side.

As for Kasumi, she was awestruck as the green armored man she had seen at the Citadel was a little more threatening looking when he was right in front of you. She wondered just who was this guy with the woman, who apparently was Shepard's second in command.

Shepard then spoke to Miranda.

"Mind if I ask what are you and the Chief doing here, Miranda?"

Miranda decided to be truthful as she knew that lying was not going to help, when dealing with a thief who might be an ally, and a dangerous one. One had to make sure some boundaries were set to make sure that things were clear.

"I asked the Chief to help me keep an eye on our newest member of the team, just to make sure that her profession does not become a problem."

Miranda then turned to Kasumi and replied.

"It's nothing personal Miss Goto, but while your talents for information gathering, resource acquisition, sabotage, infiltration, stealth, and your brand of combat are welcome additions to the mission, you are still a thief. And I would like you to know that while you're here on the Normandy, you can't go around the ship and possibly...acquire...anything that strikes your fancy. This is a warship on a mission despite it not being in the military. And the last thing we need is personal items going missing for one reason or another, which could cause unnecessary friction and could make this mission a lot harder than it has to be. I respect your talents and what you can do, but you have stolen Cerberus data and resources more than once in your career and I would like that to end."

She then gestured to John.

"The Master Chief here agreed to my suggestion and he has his own reasons for keeping a close eye on you, which is why he is here to help me keep surveillance on you."

John then decided to speak next, prodded by Cortana.

"Operative Lawson is correct Miss Goto. While I have not met you personally, your resume as a thief is a cause for concern for me as well, so I will be here to keep an eye on you until then. Do nothing that can be considered a danger, then we have nothing to worry about...do the opposite however, and I think you can guess my reaction would be...less than friendly."

Kasumi smirked,

"All right; I will behave," the thief said in a teasing tone.

"Good," Miranda placed her hands on her hip. "But we will still be watching you."

"Fine,"

Kasumi looked at the Spartan then at Miss Lawson then back at Chief. The master thief had a hypothesis about the Cerberus Officer and she wanted to see if her educated guess would work. She eyed the green armored soldier with a sly smile.

"I guess that won't be so bad," she said in a flirty tone.

Miranda Lawson frowned and had her arms folded across her chest in an angry fashion.

"If you wouldn't mind Miss Goto, I would like for you to TRY to be a little serious. We would like to get your little errand done and over with so we can get back to the real mission." Miranda said. The Cerberus Operative tried to say her words in a calm manner, but she could not help to talk in a mad voice. She wasn't very sure why was angry.

"_Interesting,"_ Kasumi thought.

The thief went back to explaining her mission on retrieving her old partner's graybox from Donovan Hock at his mansion.

"The mission will require two parts," Kasumi explained, bringing up a detailed map of Hock's mansion on the holo projector as she spoke. "The first part of the mission will have the Commander to serve as our ticket into the party that Hock will be throwing tomorrow at his own private mansion."

"And how will I be doing that Miss Goto? I thought you said I might not even need my guns. Traditionally, my insertions are on the more expressive side," Shepard frowned.

Kasumi failed to hide her smile behind her hood,

"Hence why I took the liberty of obtaining you formal evening wear Commander. I've managed to intrigue the interest of Hock with an invented man by the name of 'Solomon Gunn', whom you will be filling the role of at this party."

"This is a solo drop?" Jacob piped up, confusion and dislike evident upon his face.

Kasumi glanced at the stoic man, who merely glared back at her, with his arms across his chest, impatient for a reply. Miranda couldn't help, but smirk slightly. Apparently she wasn't the only one to harbor a dislike of having a thief onboard.

"No, I'll be attending as well, using some of my own personal talents to remain unnoticed," Kasumi explained patiently, though a hint of frustration at being interrupted was evident in her voice.

Shepard spared a brief glance at Jacob. Visibly chastised, Jacob dropped his confrontational pose, but his eyes remained hard.

Miranda was not as easily persuaded.

"What abilities do you have that we do not? Why can only you go along?" She asked, her face neutral.

Chief looked at Miranda and Shepard grinned to himself, as both were fully aware that Miranda simply didn't enjoy being told she was incapable of doing... well, anything.

"Unless any you can make yourself invisible, or have an extra invitation to this event, I doubt you'll get in unnoticed. Last time I checked, none of your Cerberus dossiers contained mention of any such abilities, nor an invitation," Kasumi replied innocently, a small smile and a twinkle in her eyes evident as Miranda growled at her reply.

"And how exactly did you get access to Cerberus dossiers? We hadn't granted you access to our network!" Miranda spat out, anger easily seen upon her face. Cerberus security was her domain, and she'd be damned if she let this woman ruin the reputation of Cerberus while she was on duty.

The Asian thief merely raised an eyebrow at her, the smile on her face staying in place. The twinkle in her eyes vanished though,

replaced with a harder and more calculating look.

"I'm a thief, Miss Lawson. I believe how I had access should be rather self-explanatory. I just wanted to see if Cerberus was hiding anything from me on this mission or if they were able to help me steal from Hock. There was no way I was signing up on this joyride without knowing what I was getting into," Kasumi explained frostily. "I should also mention that your own personal files were quite an interesting read."

Miranda growled again and began to stalk towards the hooded thief, but Chief put his hand on her shoulder, which surprisingly stopped the raging Cerberus Operative.

"Miranda,"

She glared at the Spartan, her hands clenching into fists with anger at his intervention. They shared eye contact for a few moments, before Miranda sagged with defeat.

"Fine, John," Miranda sighed and glares back at Kasumi.

"This isn't over Miss Goto," she warned the thief, as she slowly returned to her original position of leaning on the railing.

Chief acknowledged her with a small nod of his head, before returning his attention to Kasumi, whose small smile had evolved into a much larger grin.

Shepard was surprised to see that the Spartan was able to stop a raging Miranda Lawson. Very few were able to accomplish such a task like himself and the Illusive Man. He actually thought he was going to have to stop her by himself and if he was able to cool her down, he knew Miranda would find a way to make it 'bite him in the butt' in the end. So, as a way of saying thanks, Shepard nodded his head at Chief and he recieved a nod back.

"Anyways, as I was saying before I was so rudely interrupted, short of you having the capability to go unnoticed. It's just going to be Shepard and I on this mission," Kasumi explained, though in a much more gentle tone this time around.

The Master Chief was of two minds on this. On one hand, he could in fact use the active camouflage equipment he had brought from the 'Forward Unto Dawn' to remain invisible for a solid period of time, especially if he moved slowly. On the other hand, he did not want to fully disclose all of his suit's abilities, unless the mission was at stake. Cortana had different ideas.

"Chief, I think you should speak up," Cortana told him. The Chief merely waited in silence, waiting for her reasoning. "I don't trust this thief yet either, and the mission we are on requires Commander Shepard in the long run. If we lose him now, the mission is essentially lost."

Chief remained silent, as he played through several scenarios in his own mind. He wasn't exactly against the premise, but was still hesitant. He had brought an active camo with him to recruit the thief incase he had trouble meeting the her. He also brought a Plasma Pistol to stun and wound the master thief, in case she decided to be

unfriendly.

"Plus, I believe Miss Lawson will be quite appreciative of any assistance you could offer," Cortana informed him, mirth dancing in her tone.

The Chief merely let out a long sigh, but let the joke slide for now.

"I can assist on this mission," he spoke, causing several people in the room to jump slightly.

Miranda was the first to confront him.

"I don't believe I remember you informing me of any such ability, Chief," Miranda stated, with a particular emphasis on his rank.

The huge Spartan merely stared at her, the silence in the room becoming quite awkward.

"You didn't ask."

Miranda threw her hands up in frustration, but decided to let it go. This briefing was becoming rather exhausting for her.

Shepard gave the Chief a questioning glance, but decided to trust the armored behemoth. He hadn't exactly betrayed his trust in any way so far. Jacob merely wore a look of appreciation for the MJOLNIR Armor.

"Prove it," Kasumi requested, her face blank of any emotion.

Before anyone could blink, the Chief was gone, the space he occupied previously simply empty. The room's occupants examined the space around them. He had to be there, as the door to the room remained closed. Kasumi was quite impressed, but kept her focus on trying to find the armored man by looking around quickly. It wasn't until she felt the cold steel of the barrel of a gun pressed against the back of her neck that she froze.

"Good enough?" An emotionless voice from behind her asked.

Kasumi couldn't help but smile as she turned around to face the giant man.

He pulled away his pistol, and clasped it back to the magnetic holding on his thigh.

"I think you and I are going to get along just great," Kasumi laughed, imagining the heists she could pull with another individual with her capabilities for invisibility.

"It's John, right?" She asked with a flirty smile.

The Chief nodded firmly before returning to his old position.

Kasumi couldn't help but admire his silent grace, especially for a man so large wearing so much armor. She was especially pleased to see a flushed Miranda Lawson once again.

Shepard cleared his throat, drawing everyone's attention back to him.

"With that out of the way, can we get back to business?"

****Bekenstein planet in the Boltzmann system of the Serpent Nebula Cluster, the Kodiak shuttle heading to Donovan Hock's mansion/party****

The Normandy's Kodiak shuttle flew over a vast beautiful ocean that captured a reflection of the sundown. The shuttle held three occupants; the former-Spectre Commander Shepard, the Master Thief Kasumi Goto, and the Spartan super-soldier Master Chief John-117. The three of them were heading to a party hosted by Donovan Hock, a weapons dealer and smuggler. The trio was to act as simple party guests but that was not the intended plan. The real plan was to sneak through the party and steal back what once belong to someone close to Kasumi - a graybox.

Inside the shuttle the squad was going over the plan of the heist. Originally the plan was to only have Shepard and Kasumi to attend but the Spartan had another trick up his gauntlet: he had his own camouflage.

Kasumi was sliding through images of the inside of Hock's mansion. The images were more than likely given to them by Cerberus as it was part of the agreement for the Master Thief's services. Kasumi looked over to a well dressed Commander Shepard.

"You clean up well, Mr. Solomon Gunn." Kasumi used Shepard's temporary identity to help him get used to the name. Kasumi then turned to look at the Spartan.

"I can't say the same for our green armored friend here." she said with a smile as she looked at Chief who was wearing his MJOLNIR Mark VI armor.

Master Chief was standing up rather than sitting down since he wanted to get a good look at the mansion ahead and maybe see if there are any interesting openings. He did not respond or even look at Kasumi but stared at the huge home of Donovan Hock. Since this was a stealth mission, John decided to go with more silent Covenant weapons though he did miss his UNSC weapons greatly. Chief was sporting a Covenant Beam Rifle on his back, a Plasma Rifle on his hip, an Energy Sword on his other hip, and a Needle Rifle. For equipment Chief brought the active camo as it was essential for the mission. Instead of grenades the Spartan brought extra active camouflages since the grenades would cause quite a racket and would surely cost them the mission.

"I thought I said to wear something formal?" Kasumi asked.

Chief did not say anything back to the questioning thief like the silent super-soldier he was. The question and the mission greatly reminded him of the award ceremony on Cairo Station above Earth. Sergeant Avery Johnson said something very similar to what Kasumi said, and the words made him recall the ceremony on Cairo station. John-117 received his MJOLNIR Mark VI armor in the Cairo armory prior to attending an awards ceremony in the station's command center. The ceremony was interrupted by the Battle of Earth when thirteen

Covenant CCS-class Battlecruisers and two Assault Carriers attacked Earth. They'd tried to break through the Cairo's battle cluster by sending boarding craft to plant bombs on the stations to destroy them. Fleet Admiral Hood had commanded the UNSC forces from the station during the attack. Unlike the Athens and the Malta, Cairo had survived the Covenant attempt to detonate a Covenant Bomb on board. In an ironic twist, the bomb was located and used by Master Chief to blow up a Covenant Assault Carrier. This was during the Covenant invading Earth, but before killing Regret, before leaving Cortana on the Flood infected High Charity, before the Ark, before fighting side by side with his former enemy the Arbiter, before the death of Sergeant Avery Johnson and Miranda Keyes, ... before he left his universe.

"Well, I hear dressing like a tank is in nowadays. You can just pose as a bodyguard." Kasumi said as she then turned and faced the images of the mansion before her.

Chief was brought out of his thoughts, though he showed no sign of flinching or anything. He looked at the images that were of Hock's mansion to get a good understanding of the layout.

"Never the less, Hock won't know what hit him right, Mr. Solomon Gunn?" Kasumi said and then looked at Shepard.

Shepard looked back at her,

"I assume Solomon Gunn is my cover."

"You run a small but talented band of mercs in the Terminus Systems. Precisely the type of person Hock respects." Kasumi's hand touched a holographic file in front of her, and then holographic files popped up in front of Shepard. Each file contained information on Shepard's temporary identity. The ex-Spectre skimmed across the information to get a good run down on his alias.

"I took the liberty of giving you a reputation. Papers, witnesses, article in Badass Weekly. Just don't' start talking business with him and you'll be fine." Kasumi finished.

"She sure does come prepared. I am beginning to like her, Chief." Cortana said inside the Master Chief's helmet.

"Where did you find the suit?" Shepard asked.

"I have my ways. You look great! You should wear that stuff more often." Kasumi complemented which brought a small blush on Shepard's face.

"Do you have a plan ma'am?" John-117 was curious to know what the thief had in mind. She seemed quite clever as she was able to break into vaults, come up with authentic looking identities, and still had not been caught yet.

"You two have been waiting patiently." Kasumi touched another image in front of her that was of the main floor of Hock's mansion.

"Our friend Hock is throwing a party for his closest friends. A couple dozen of the worst liars, cheaters, and mass murders you'll ever want to meet, all bringing gifts as a tribute to the man

himself."

Kasumi then scrolled the images that go to a picture of a golden statue that looked like an all too familiar Turian ex-Spectre.

"Our tribute is a lovely statue of your old friend Saren, rendered with loving detail and filled to the brim with our weapons and armor, excluding the Chief of course. You can keep your pistol, as long it's concealed. They won't hassle over your sidearm, but I am not sure about your bodyguard." Kasumi looks over to the Spartan. "I guess we will figure that out along the way," Kasumi then looked back at the images in front of her. "Once inside, we'll make our way to Hock's vault door, somewhere in the ballroom. Then we case the security and start peeling away the layers. The statue should be there, waiting for you to crack it open and arm up. Then we just waltz into the vault and take back Keiji's graybox. And I will finally get a chance to say goodbye."

A thought then hit Shepard. This Keiji must have had strong romantic feelings for Kasumi.

"You've worked really hard on this; Keiji must have meant a lot to you."

"Was I that obvious?" Kasumi asked, showing no sign of hurt or remorse.

"Keiji's graybox holds a lot of priceless, precious memories. It's all that remains of who he was. But the secret he discovered is dangerous. I wouldn't bring the both of you if it wasn't."

"What's in this graybox? The Spartan spoke up. John was fascinated by this graybox device. The ability to hold so much information and memories is something to be treasured. It could be an effective way of training new Spartans and look back at precious times. He definitely could have used it when he had to explain who he was to Shepard and Miranda.

"The graybox holds Keiji's memories. Everything from all of the codes and plans he stole to all the time we spent together. Wrapped up in those memories is the secret he stole. Keiji never told me what it was, but the information got him killed." Kasumi explained.

"This should be interesting." Shepard pointed out.

"That's what I'm going for." Kasumi replied.

The Kodiak shuttle slowly descended to the landing port/entrance of Hock's mansion. The shuttle door opened up and the occupants inside got out, Solomon Gunn (Shepard), escort Kasumi, and bodyguard Master Chief.

"This is our stop." Kasumi said as all of them walked up to the entrance of Hock's home.

All three of them looked to the left to see an Eclipse guard in green armor, unloading the golden statue of Saren. Normally nobody would have liked a statue of a pariah like Saren, but going to a murder like Hock... it will fit in well with his collection of art.

John-117 has done his research on this 'Saren' character. Spectre that went rogue, tried to rally the Geth to take over the Citadel and kill the Council - or so said the Codex.

Miranda Lawson eventually explained the whole truth of the Saren conspiracy and the Sovereign plot. Chief could not help but to think that Saren was like the Sangheili in appearance and history; powerful and a skilled warrior, persuasive and good at rallying people, but also deceived in a plot to wipe out everything. Chief felt some pity for the deceased Turian Spectre but if'd he seen him in person, he would have killed Saren without hesitation. After all he'd been a huge threat to the galaxy.

"After you boys," Kasumi spoke.

The trio began to walk up the stairs to Hock's party but they were stopped by one of Hock's guard who was scanning the Saren statue.

"Just one moment, sir. There seems to be an issue with the statue."

"_If they found out about the statue, then we will have to go in the party guns blazing. This mission might be disastrous." _Shepard thought as his hand reached for the concealed pistol. Kasumi leaned against Shepard to act as an escort but also to hide Shepard's hand so the guards didn't see him reaching for his weapon.

"Is there a problem here?" A Caucasian man with a brown top shaved hairstyle, dressed in a pure white coat like suit speaking with an Afrikaans accent, walked down the stairs.

"No, Mr. Hock. Just doing a scan." The Eclipse guard replied as he scanned the statue once more with his Omni-tool.

The man known as Mr. Hock turned his head to the three guests.

"I don't believe we met. Donovan Hock." Hock introduced himself.

Shepard relaxed a little bit. He then tapped Kasumi on the side with his hidden hand, to let her know that she could stop leaning on him to conceal his sidearm.

"I've heard a lot about you. Name's Solomon Gunn," Shepard held his hand out for a handshake, though Hock did not shake the former Spectre's hand.

"And I have heard a lot about you. You've been very busy lately, if the extranet is to be believed."

The Eclipse guard called to his boss Hock.

"Sir, the scanners aren't picking up anything." The guard said as he tried to figure out the strange gift.

Hock walked up to the statue with his hands behind his back and studied the statue. He then reached a conclusion.

"I don't think our guests would come all the way here, from Illium just to cause trouble. Do you?" Hock questioned the Eclipse guard with a rhetorical question, though the guard was scratching his head to show his nervousness.

Hock shook his head at his guard's foolishness and looked back at Gunn and his crew. Hock studied the three person group in front of him. Solomon Gunn looked perfectly normal for the party as he was well groomed and dressed in a nice, expensive black suit.

The other two, however, were not quite the same. One was rather tall, easily as big as a Krogan. Hock couldn't figure out the hulking figure was since it was covered in strange bulky dark green armor. The golden visor didn't even give the slightest hint of any facial features under the helmet as it only showed Hock's reflection. And the weapons on the stranger were just as mysterious as it was. Donovan Hock could only guess that it was some sort of bodyguard for Gunn.

The other female companion was just as unknown as the bodyguard. She was dressed in skin tight black clothes like any consort or escort would dress as at a party except there was a hood that covered the top part of her face. The woman clung to 's arm, which hinted that she was a consort or escort, but she still gave off a shady vibe. The sly grin on the woman's face did not help Hock's thoughts of her. A thought then crossed Hock's mind on who this woman really was, but he would keep it to himself.

"You may pass through, Mr. Gunn with my apologies. But I will ask your companions to remain outside. You understand, I hope."

"Care to explain why my companions have to stay outside?" Shepard asked.

"I don't like the looks of your friends. I know you are well known for your deadly mercenaries, but having them inside the party will make the other party guests nervous." Hock stated as he eyed the other two strange companions of Mr. Gunn (Shepard).

Though this was an inconvenience, Shepard knew that Chief and Kasumi had other means of getting into the social gathering.

"No problem. You're the host."

"Enjoy the party." Hock then turned and left to join in on the celebration.

Shepard looked back to the Spartan and the thief. Both of them nodded their heads and walked off out of sight to activate their camouflages. Shepard then ascended up the stairs to attend Hock's party.

****Inside Hock's mansion****

Solomon Gun, a.k.a Commander Shepard, walked through the doors and observed the party. It seemed like a fairly casual affair, though everything from the elaborate evening wear worn by the guests to the prim tinkling of a piano in the background for ambiance dripped with the type of arrogant decadence that only the rich seemed to possess. As he wound his way through the crowd languidly, he let his attention

drift between the swarms of easy conversation, most of it about suitably vile subjects ranging from murder to outright corruption of the political system - exactly what he would expect from a crowd as disreputable as this. Some even spoke of the rumours that the 'great Commander Shepard' had been resurrected from death and how the mysterious Archangel had all but ground their operations to a halt on Omega. Those made Shepard grin.

Hock had quite a nice home, a big home. There was bookshelves and stacked together like seen in libraries or archives lined along either side of the entrance. Ahead of the books were two sets of curved stairs that lead to the upper floor that held sculpture, art, and more books. In the middle of the room on the main floor, there was a fountain with a statue that looked like a globe of some sort. After all that there was a deck that had a beautiful view of a city, and a view of Hock's large bedroom.

Unbeknownst to Shepard, two blurred objects walk past him. One was thin and small the other was tall and bulky.

"We need to find the door and case the security. We'll figure out the next step then," Kasumi said over the radio attached to Shepard.

After a few minutes of walking through Hock's party, Shepard found a set of stairs that were behind the fountain. The stairs went down and led to an empty hallway and after that was another set of stairs that led back to the party.

"Commander, I am reading high energy levels on your position." the Spartan radio-ed.

"The vault should be down there. We will meet you there." Kasumi added.

Shepard casually walked down the stairs and stopped in the middle of the hall. Master Chief and Kasumi de-cloaked before the ex-Spectre. The wall that they were standing by dissolves, as it was a hologram that hid Hock's supposedly impenetrable vault. The trio examined the vault that was encased in an orange barrier, with all sorts of gadgets and locks by it.

"Hmm, very nice. There's more here than I expected." Kasumi walked up to the vault while studying it, with Chief and Shepard not far behind.

Shepard walked up to the golden statue that contained his weapons and armor. The Commander gave the statue a nasty glare as he reminisced about all of the trouble that the Spectre Turian has caused him and his old Normandy crew. After all of the anger, Shepard still pitied him. During the final confrontation between Shepard and Saren on the Citadel, Saren had shot himself in the head to end Sovereign's control over him. The Commander tore his eyes away from the statute and looked at the vault.

"Password protected voice lock, Kinetic barrier. DNA scanner" looks like an EX-700 series. Everything a vault needs to be impenetrable." Kasumi raised her hand up to her mouth in a thinking position.

"Is this going to be a problem?" The former Spectre asked, not

wanting to abort the mission since the vault was truly impenetrable. All of the planning, and paper work for nothing.

Chief was thinking to himself about the vault door. He had a few thoughts on how he could get the door open but all had deep consequences. He could have Cortana to disable the security systems and unlock the vault door. Without a doubt, Cortana could accomplish all of this but performing such a big feat, may expose her to Shepard and Kasumi. The other thought was that he could activate his Energy Sword and cut through the door, but that would most likely set off the alarms, comprising their mission. So, Chief decided he would keep quiet and follow along with Kasumi's plan of opening the vault her way.

"Please. Remember who you are talking to." Kasumi turned around to face her other two male companions. "We'll need to get a voice sample for the voice lock. Shepard, you'll have to go chat up Hock for that. We'll have to find a password, too. DNA? Child's play. We should find plenty of DNA samples in Hock's private quarters. And the barrier? Cut the power. Never failsâ€¦ if we can find it. Keiji could get through a system like this in his sleep. And I'm better. Let's do this."

Kasumi and Chief used their camouflage technology once more and walk out of the room, along with Shepard. Before they stepped out of the hallway, Kasumi noticed a power cable sticking out of the floor by a wall.

The thief walked up to the cable and examined it,

"_It looks like the barrier's power cable runs under the floor here." _she thought to herself. She then set her Omni-tool to scan for the electromagnetic fields.

It was there, that Kasumi contacted both Chief and Shepard on the radio.

"Guys, I will take care of the kinetic barrier. I think I found where the power is."

Kasumi followed the trail of the electromagnetic fields that took her across the party and into the right side of the main floor by some bookshelves, a mini-statue and strangely a lit fireplace. Kasumi saw that the trail stopped at the statue. She then had the thought that this had happened to on her another job before.

The thief pulled the statue down and the fireplace receded into the wall and was replaced by an angular, box-shaped generator. It was the power to the barrier to the vault. She cuts the power with an simple Overcharge. The electromagnetic field trail then disappeared from her Omni-tool.

"The power has been cut. The barrier should be down." Kasumi said over the radio.

"Good job. I am about to talk with Hock." Shepard replied.

"Great. All you need to do is keep him talking long enough for me to get a voiceprint. Pull out the charm on this one, Shep."

Shepard walked up to Hock, who was with a few party members already. Meanwhile, Kasumi secretly de-cloaked behind a shelf of books, away from party guests, and recalibrated her Omni-tool to get the voiceprint.

"After you," Kasumi gestured.

Hock noticed Gunn's presence and turned to face him.

"Mr. Gunn. I hope you're having a good time." Hock shook Mr. Gunn's hand. "That scene at the door hasn't soured our evening, I hope."

"I understand the security, but who would dare to break into Donovan Hock's home?"

"Gunn, in our line of work, we attract a certain element. Few understand the pains we take to keep the barbarians at bay. People these days want comfort, entertainment, love. They don't see that the galaxy is fragile." People started to notice what Hock was saying, though it switched to sound more like a speech. "They only have to worry about simple luxuries. Why? Because people like me"and you"are doing the terrible things that keep the galaxy spinning."

More and more party guests were watching and listening to Hock. Unknown to Hock each word he said, only helped Kasumi with her master plan.

"This party is for us. The cleaners. The support structure for the galaxy's delusions of peace. May there always be a market for the things we do!" Hock held his hands out for a big finish for his speech.

Party guest began to clap and cheer at Hock for his words that related to them all to well.

"I said get him talking and you got him talking. We got enough for a voice sample. Let him go," Kasumi said as she put away her Omni-tool and cloaked again.

"Enjoy the party, Mr. Gunn." Hock then turned back to address other party guest.

Shepard smirked at his handiwork, but then her the Asian thief over the radio.

"Once we get the password, we can get past the voice scanner." Kasumi said.

While Kasumi and Shepard were inside the mansion, John-117 was out on the deck using his own active camo. Chief was on the deck, to see if there was anything interesting. There wasn't much that there, just a few party guests and a view of a city. As he was walking along, he stumbled upon a datapad, on the edge of the decking. Chief picked up the datapad and read it.

Pvt. Reems:

_No way we can sneak out of that party. The place is locked down tight, and Security Chief Roe's in charge. No way Roe would let that

get past her._

_I'd rather stand around bored on guard duty than risk her wrath.
Sorry._

_Samuels _

_P.S. I am going to the store later. Daniel said we needed headlight fluid and elbow-grease, so I might be a little late to the party.

—

"I bet this is from the guards and I bet they have the password we need." Cortana said inside Chief's helmet.

"We need to get there." Chief replied.

"We past the security room, on our way in. I'll set a marker on your HUD." Cortana set the marker on John's HUD and saw that it lead back into the party.

"Just follow the yellow brick road, Dorothy. Instead of little midgets and flying monkeys there are crooks and murders." Cortana joked.

Chief then contacted Shepard and Kasumi over the comm.

"This is Spartan-117; I am going to the security room. They more than likely have the password there."

"Good, keep it silent." Kasumi said in a whisper tone, where he guessed that someone was behind her and she did not want to be found.

"Affirmative."

Master Chief walked up to the door to the security only to find it locked, but it was no problem for the Spartan for he had a trick up his gauntlet - or, rather, an A.I. Chief raised his hand to the door and instantly it unlocked. The door opened and it led to another hallway, but at the end of the hallway was the door to the security room. Chief walked up to the last obstacle, still in his camouflage, and found that this one was also locked. He repeated the process with the door like he had with the other door and the door opened.

Inside the security room were two Eclipse guards, one was on a holographic computer and the other was just standing around by the door. Both of the guards were looking where the door opened only to see that nothing was there. They stare at the door for a few seconds longer until the door closed.

"Huh? The door must be malfunctioning. We should report that to Hock later." The Eclipse guard at the computer suggested.

"Yeah, later though. Hey, you will not believe what I told Samuels today. I told him we need some headlight fluid and elbow grease, so he should go to the store and get some." The guard that was standing said as he laughed.

"No way!" The guard at the computer laughed, "What an id-."

The guard did not get to finish as a pink glowing needle was embedded in his forehead. The dead guard fell from his chair.

The other Eclipse guard was shocked at what had transpired, to which he quickly reached for his pistol on his side... but does not grab it in time. An invisible force was pressed against his neck that felt like an armored arm. Next, a hissing sound was made and an energy like dual point sword was sticking out of his stomach when then lifted him off the ground. The guard tried to scream, but it was of no use as he only emitted a sound that was like sucking in breath. The guard closed his eyes and died.

Chief dropped the Eclipse's body and let it fall to the ground. He holstered the Needle Rifle on his back and deactivated the Energy Sword and attached it back to his side. The Spartan walked over by the computer, but found another datapad beside it. He picked it up and read it.

Nance:

I have that problem, too. So many passwords around here, can't keep them straight. The password for tonight is 'PERUGGIA', so it's not even that easy to remember.

It's no big deal. That voice scanner means the password's only useful to Hock, anyway.

After I get back from the market, want to grab some beers? Let me know.

_Samuels _

The radio then went off and it was Kasumi speaking.

"Got something, Chief?"

"Affirmative. The password is 'PERUGGIA'."

"Huh. That's the name of the man who stole the Mona Lisa. Nice. Now, I just take the voice sample we got from Hock, andâ€¦ Got it! Now we can crack that voice scanner. All that is left is the DNA sample. We can find that in his bedroom."

"I found a way to Hock's bedroom. Meet me on the deck." The Spartan said as he recalled seeing the ledge that led to Hock's room on the deck."

"Roger that. See you there, big guy."

John got off the radio and started to walk out of the security room, but Cortana stopped him.

"Wait Chief! Get me to that computer. I have an idea."

Chief obeyed the order and placed his hand on the computer.

Few minutes later on Hock's mansion deck

Shepard and Kasumi got to the far side of the deck and spotted the ledge that the Spartan must have been telling them about. Shepard

took a quick look around so that no one would see what they would be doing. Then he and a camouflaged Kasumi, jumped over the balcony railing and landed on the ground. The area around them looked like a garden like area that was still under going construction. There was no grass, but gravel instead. A few hardhats were placed on the ground beside a few bushes. Pillars were lined up that held the floor above them, stabilizing the area. Fortunately, they saw a path that led to Hock's bedroom window.

There were three Eclipse guards that had not spotted Shepard nor Kasumi. Since this was a stealth mission, they were going to take them out quietly. It wasn't nothing that they couldn't handle.

Two guards were standing by pillars, and the other was by the window.

Shepard quietly snuck up behind the first guard by the pillar and pulled out his M-6 Carnifex heavy pistol. He aimed the pistol at the back head of the guard. After a few tense seconds, he pulled the trigger. The shot went straight through the guard's head and the lifeless body fell. It also alerted the other two guards and they brought up their weapons.

****POV of the guard by the pillar****

The other guard that was by the pillar was about to engage the intruder, but he suddenly got stopped by a woman that appeared out of nowhere in a skin tight black suit with a black hood. The woman struck him with her Omni-tool but it was no mere punch, but an attack that seemed to combine powers and tech. The attack went straight through his shields and armor and sent him a few feet, sliding across the ground, mortally wounded. The Eclipse guard opened his eyes, but could not move his body... or even feel it for that matter. A feeling in his gut told him he was dying and he believed his gut.

His vision was starting to blur and he was feeling cold, but he did managed to see a couple of figures had sprinted by the pillar that he was once standing by. Through his blurry vision he was able to make out the intruders, a man with some scars in a nice suit and the hooded woman. They must have been taking cover behind the pillar to avoid the shots from his co-worker. The guard's hearing had to be failing him, for every word that he heard made echoed. Never the less he was able to understand the words.

The man turned to the hooded woman.

"What was that attack?" The words echoed.

"It's called Shadowstrike." The words echoed but he was able to hear the small chuckle.

The guard coughed up blood in his helmet. "_Huh_ Shadowstrike cough_ it fits perfectly for the attack. A silent attack that kills in one blow." _The guard closed his eyes and then nothing.

****Normal POV****

"Nice move, but can you do it again?" Shepard asked Kasumi as both of them took cover behind a pillar to avoid shots from the last Eclipse

Guard.

"Yeah, but it needs to recharge first."

The firing coming from the last guard stopped. Shepard poked his head out a few centimeters and saw that the guard was reloading his assault rifle and was foolish enough to not take cover. He stepped out and aimed his heavy pistol at the guard for a headshot. The Commander was about to pull the trigger, but stopped when the guard's neck suddenly twisted in one-hundred eighty degrees. Shepard was completely taken off-guard by the sight, but he did not lower his weapon.

The Eclipse guard's body fell to the floor and Shepard kept his aim. The second the body hit the ground a large object de-cloaked and it was a familiar object or rather a person. He pulled his gun up to see that it was none other than the Master Chief.

Shepard bore a smirk on his face, and lets his hands fall to his side with the gun still in his fingers.

"Good to see you, Chief."

"Likewise, Commander." The Spartan simply said.

Kasumi walked besides Shepard and pointed to the windows behind Master Chief.

"Look there. We can go through the windows and get into Hock's bedroom."

Chief, Kasumi, and Shepard snuck through the window and got into Hock's room. They were now in a perfect location to find a DNA sample of Donovan Hock. After a thorough search through Hock's bedroom, the team was able to find a few usable samples on one of the couches, a wineglass, and a datapad. They collected the samples and made their way back to the vault underneath Hock's party - though the Spartan and the thief had to turn on their cloaks.

****Back at the vault****

Kasumi walked up to the vault, which did not have a barrier around it anymore. She entered the password 'PERUGGIA', into the voice lock with Hock's voice. She then put Hock's DNA on the DNA Scanner 700. Both the machines accepted the entries that were not actually inserted by the owner, but Kasumi. With all the requested items accepted, the vault opened.

"I'll go ahead and check for security cams. Go ahead and get dressed, Shep. Chief, watch out for anyone that sneaks up on us." Kasumi said.

Shepard nodded his head, and walked to the golden statue of Saren that was placed in the vault with the other party gifts. The ex-Spectre opened up a secret compartment on the statue and inside revealed his N7 armor and weapons. He grabbed everything and started to suit up.

Kasumi walked inside the vault, while doing some work on her Omni-tool. She looked up at the camera inside it. The thief waved her

Omni-tool at the camera. Though it looked like nothing happen, but she actually disabled the cameras.

Chief and Shepard walked into the vault with Kasumi. Chief pulled out his Needle Rifle in case of any surprise attacks as it had happened to him quite a few times unexpectedly in his universe. All three of them turned and watched the vault door close without anyone knowing that they are inside it. Before the vault could even close, Kasumi left a devious smile on her face, her plan was coming into place.

****_Inside Hock's Vault_****

The door to Hock's vault opened and the three commandos stepped out. It turns out that the vault was actually an elevator to Hock's true vault. The vault itself looked more like a museum or gallery, filled with expensive treasures all on pedestals.

"So this is Hock's vault. Very nice." Kasumi said and she then pulled out a scanner like object. "This scanner will hone to the graybox. It's not far."

The three member team started to walk and every step they took, the scanner would beep louder and more often to signify that they are approaching the graybox. Though the objective was to retrieve the graybox, the group could not help but to examine the treasures in the vault.

On the right side of them was the famous white statue Michelangelo's David though it was missing some limbs and it had cuts and holes around the whole masterpiece. The damage to the statue could have happened from age, accidents, or other people trying to steal it.

"Michelangelo's David! Justâ€| wow!" Kasumi breathed in astonishment at the renaissance art. "Think we can get this out through the door?"

"I doubt it." Shepard replied.

"I gotta admit. Hock has good taste, I will give him that." Kasumi said while eyeing a Krogan statue.

Kasumi, Shepard and Chief looked at a Turian's art, but what it actually looked like is a ring cut in three pieces.

"I know it does not look like much, but that might be the most valuable piece here. Turian art is rare outside of Palavan and for good reason some say."

"Chief, does that kind of remind you of the Halos?" Cortana asked inside of John's helmet.

The Spartan does not say anything back, but he could not help to think of the Halo Installations he had been on and the deadly creatures that came with itâ€| the Flood.

Shepard turned around and saw a mini-statue or sculpture of a Rachni Queen. This did make him think of what happen to the Rachni after he released the queen on Noveria. Shepard sometimes thought that

releasing her could have been a mistake after the damage they have caused, but he did think that they were being controlled by the Reapers. The ex-Spectre does recall of hearing something about ships that had Rachni design. How much could have the Rachni have accomplished in two years?

"Ugh! A Rachni Queen. Guess everything is valuable to someone." Kasumi commented on the statue with disdain.

The group then walked to another display but this was in a glass case. They look inside and see that it is some tablets with writing on them.

"This looks like Quarian script! Wow!" Kasumi looked at the scripts in awe. "This has got be old. When was the last time the Quarrians wrote on stone?"

Shepard saw a Prothean statue. _"How the hell did Hock get a Prothean statue? The only ones I saw were on Illos." _Shepard thought to himself. Beside the Prothean statue was an Egyptian statue of a Sphinx's head.

"I could still get money from something like this, even outside the Alliance. Asari go nuts for this sort of thing." Kasumi thought of all the ways to profit from the ancient piece from Egypt.

Chief, Shepard and Kasumi all three looked at the biggest and most valuable piece in Hock's vaultâ€¦| The Statue of Liberty's head.

"How the hell did Hock get Lady Liberty's head? Damn you, Hock!" Kasumi exclaimed.

Though it was a shocking moment, Shepard could not help to smile at the 'Planet of the Apes' reference Kasumi made.

"Maybe we can carry this out with us? Hey Chief, would mind picking this up andâ€¦|."

"No." The Spartan simply said.

"Fine, ruin a girl's fun." Kasumi pouted.

The beeping on Kasumi's scanner went off, and they follow it the small box shape object that was known as a graybox. Besides the grayboxâ€¦| was a pair of small machine gun weapons. Shepard walked up the weapons and picked one of them up and examined it.

Kasumi started to inform both Shepard and Chief what they are, "That's a Kassa Locust. No, THE Kassa Locusts. The gun that killed two Presidents. Gorgeous and it even comes with a perfect copy too. I'm sure Hock won't mind if we borrow these." Kasumi smirked.

"We can use them. Once we get back to the Normandy we can have Jacob replicate them." Shepard suggested. Shepard attached the Locust to his back and threw the other to Kasumi.

Kasumi caught the weapon and examined it herself.

"Good idea. We can always use more firepower." Kasumi holstered the weapon.

The weapon did look interesting to Chief, but he preferred the weapons he carried with him as he had more experience with Covenant weaponry. He might study it later if he gets some time to himself.

Kasumi looked at the graybox that was once conveniently close to Kassa Locust weapons.

"There it is!" Kasumi said as if she was out of breath. Kasumi activated her Omni-tool and tried to unlock the graybox and retrieve the data.

"Don't bother, Miss Goto."

All three commandos quickly turned their heads to where they heard the familiar voice.

"It's codelocked," Hock said. A holographic projection of his head appeared and covered the entire far wall of the vault near the other exit. His image reached from floor to the ceiling of the vault, which gave him a good view of the intruders.

Kasumi quickly checked the uplink and saw that the data transfer was still going strong. Whatever codes Hock used to try to lock her out was obviously lacking or he didn't know what he was talking about. Regardless, her blood boiled at the sight of him.

"I had a feeling that was you at the door. I knew if it was really you, you'd get through anyway." Hock said.

"You know me. I don't like to disappoint," Kasumi replied.

"I need what's in your graybox, Kasumi. You know I'm willing to kill you for it," Hock threatened. "I'll admit your skills are impressive. You got into my vault like I'd left it open. But you're still going to die, screaming, just like your old friend."

"Let's see you try!" Kasumi challenged with venom in her voice.

Hock's holographic head disappeared, but the door at the end of the vault opened. The second the holographic image of Hock disappeared, Chief pulled out his Covenant Beam Rifle and took aim at the door at the end of the vault. Master Chief has been through so many scenarios like this, he knew what to expect. The person would make some speech and then leave, but send out some troops to fight him. Guilty Spark did this on the first Halo he has been on and he used his Sentinels. The Prophet of Truth used Brute Honor Guards on High Charity. Gravemind used two Elite Combat Forms on the Ark when he and the Arbiter killed the Prophet of Truth. After each and every fight, Chief would come out on top in these scenarios and sometimes he would catch the leader and kill him and hopefully this time will be no different for him.

When the door at the end of the vault opened, eight Eclipse guards piled out and behind all of them was Chief Roe. Unfortunately for the guards, Shepard was carrying his Grenade Launcher and they were all piled together very closely. Shepard launched five grenades from his M-100 Grenade Launcher into the tight Eclipse group. All five shots

collided with guards and the blast sent bodies flying in different directions. There was a large barrier of smoke from the explosions of the grenades. Once the smoke cleared, it revealed all of the guards were dead except Chief Roe. All the bodies of the Eclipse guards must have blocked some of the damage from the devastating Grenade Launcher. Chief Roe was badly beaten and bleeding from different parts of her body. Roe tried to get up, but when she was about to stand a long purple beam pierced her armor and went through her heart and out the back of her armor. Roe's eyes rolled back into her head and she exhaled her final breath. Chief Roe died before she even hit the ground. Everything was clear.

"I'm glad I brought you two along. Both of you are doing great." Kasumi complemented.

"I aim to please." Shepard replied.

"Checking blueprints. A landing pad is located the east of our location. We can escape there." Chief informed to Shepard and Kasumi.

Shepard reached up to his ear with his armored hand, "Joker, bring the shuttle in. Now!"

"You got it Commander. Sending the shuttle down." Joker said over the radio.

Meanwhile on the Normandy-SR2

Miranda Lawson walked out of the elevator and into the hangar bay, also known as Master Chief John-117's quarters. Miss Lawson stepped carefully into the Spartan's room while glancing all around the area to be on the look for some sort of security or traps that John has left behind to protect his valuable technology and equipment. As Miranda treaded cautiously inside the room, Miss Lawson could not but help to marvel at the sight of the strange unique and advance technology that the Spartan has kept within his quarters, even though she has seen the weapons multiple times and some of the deadly feats that each weapon is capable of.

After a few minutes of looking around, Miranda felt that it was safe to move on and examine some of the equipment that Chief kept. Miranda could see all kinds of strange weaponry, few that she knew and most that she didn't.

"_Maybe he can show me some more of these weapons later on. Hopefully it won't be just on a mission." _Miranda thought to herself.

Each weapon that Miranda saw was different and without doubt has its own special features. The weapons were in strange shape and color as some were black, blue, and gray, purple, red and some other colors. Miss Lawson saw one of the weapons that the Spartan has showed her on their alone time. She walked over to the gray weapon and picked it up.

The weapon was an Assault Rifle which was called an MA5C ICWS Assault Rifle and it seemed to suit the Spartan a great deal, the image of the Spartan walking into battle with this had an appeal to it, and the images she had seen thus far from his records showed that it was a deadly weapon. Still it was strange that people in the 26th century

uses conventional gun powder propellant, that sort of technology would be seen as archaic here in this reality and finding anyone to make these rounds would be like finding a docile Thresher Maw. Miranda also was a bit curious about how it felt in hand. She hefted the weapon while being careful not to accidentally depress the trigger and found it to be a bit heavier than the M8 Avenger or the Vindicator Battle Rifle, and the Mattock and was rather beefy as well. Even though the weapon itself used actual bullets, it felt like when holding the weapon it demanded power. The fact that it was made unlike their weapons meant that it could not fold up and thus you could only carry one as well. She looked the weapon over and found a switch that activated some hidden iron sights...primitive but effective, namely when your HUDs and targeting system was online.

The attached flashlight was interesting with a built in power cell that could replenish itself and it seemed that it could be detached as well, the electronic ammunition counter was well made and the suite effective, along with the built in compass if needed when the map was offline. The woman looked over the weapon carefully, taking in more of the details. The weapon was apparently made with high grade titanium as well as ceramics, meaning that while it was heavier somewhat, it was well constructed and durable, as well as being water proof and made to work on a number of environments. The barrel appeared that it could be outfitted with sound suppressors, to make it a more silent close to medium range weapon, it could no doubt be upgraded with a grenade launcher module system or even a shotgun if she guessed it right. This meant that with the right systems and used in the right conditions, it would be a very effective backup weapon or main weapon.

And considering the information on John's reality, this could be made in bulk as well as the ammunition and with its durability and stability, it would be considered a workhorse style of weapon. The grip was also comfortable and sturdy to boot so it was not a problem to use in a fight.

She removed the clip and looked to see the ammunition, it was using 7.62x51mm NATO rounds which actually raised her eyebrow since before Mass Accelerator weapons were made more commonplace, this type of round was usually reserved only for battle rifles, machine guns, and sniper rifles...never for front line assault rifles. The recoil and size alone meant that such rounds were too powerful for conventional weapons which was why only a certain number of weapons for infantry were using these rounds. To make this round commonplace meant that the weapon had a very advanced recoil compensation system, which was rather innovative. She removed a bullet and studied it, surprised at the care and detail placed into the round, it had none of the flaws that went into making bullets like this, a trait that was surprising to her as this would mean that the round would actually be more accurate and damaging due to having no flaws. The clip was large to accommodate at least thirty two rounds and was not too heavy, made entirely out of high quality ceramic.

_This weapon might be primitive to us here...but had this weapon been made in the 20th century at the time...this would have demanded cutthroat prices in either the regular markets or the black market. Even though it uses actual bullets this gun could still cause quite some damage, though not as effective like the plasma weaponry John has been using. _Miranda thought to herself.

She then began to think something over...this weapon actually had promise and after running through a few calculations and theories in her mind, she hoped that this would be useful in the future. This weapon should not be left to rot away since it actually could be useful once upgraded with their technology. And she suspected that once they got rid of the older technology, this weapon could be used as a test bed for more radical technology and upgrades, which could be rather useful against the Collectors and whatever forces the Reapers might send their way.

Plus it would help make the Chief more...comfortable with the reality he was now part of. And to allow him to be more used to it would help him in the mission...though there was a part of her that hoped that this would make him a lot more open about working with not just Shepard and the others, but her as well. So far he had proven that he was all right in her presence and that was a good thing in her mind, but to show that she could help him get used to their reality more might be a good thing.

With that in mind, she spoke to EDI.

"EDI, can you patch me with Jacob and Zaeed, I need to talk to them."

"Right away Miss Lawson."

Back at Hock's mansion

Commander Shepard, Kasumi Goto, and Master Chief go through the door that the Chief and her lackeys came through. The door opened and it took them down a hallway. They proceeded down the hallway into the security room and into an underground military storage area. It was your typical looking military hangar, it was grey with large and wide space. It was like a large hallway, but there would be doors on the side that would lead to rooms or other ways to access to certain places. Vehicles parked in various spots and had crates and boxes scattered around on the floor for unknown reasons. Suddenly, two of the hangar doors open and a few Eclipse mercenaries came through!

The three member team took cover behind some crates. Shepard and Kasumi both pulled out the Locusts that they just 'borrowed' from Hock. The Eclipse guards will be an excellent test for their new small machine guns.

And then as if Hock himself heard the thoughts of Shepard, three Eclipse guards were proceeding through the garage hall. They were pacing through the garage in a triangle formation. Shepard and Kasumi peer over the crates they were hiding behind to see a good way to ambush Hock's lackeys.

"Let's see how well these Locusts do in action." Kasumi eagerly said as she prepped herself for combat.

"Alright Chief, you take the one in the back of the triangle." Shepard ordered.

"Done, Commander."

Shepard looked over the crate to look at the Eclipse guards advancing on their position.

"Kasumi and I will deal with the two!" Shepard did not get to finish his strategy, for when he looked back to discuss his plan with eye contact. Unfortunately the Spartan was gone.

Shepard's eyes widen, "Wha? Where did he go?" The former Spectre exclaimed.

Shepard quickly looked over to Kasumi to see if she had an answer to their dilemma. When Shepard looked at the thief, she only shrugged her shoulders to show that she did not know.

The Commander let out a sigh in frustration.

Out of nowhere, there was a loud scream emitting from the Eclipse guards. Shepard and Kasumi poked their heads out from cover to see the two Eclipse guards in front of the triangle formation staring at the guard behind them. The guard was screaming as if he was in a great amount of pain. Kasumi and Shepard then noticed something strange about the guard. His arm looked like it was being crushed or compressed with an extreme amount of force and it was the size of a large hand. Then an Energy Sword activated behind the screaming guard and went straight through him which stopped his screaming and his arm was no longer being crushed. The weapon was used with enough force and strength that the man was about nine feet in the air on the sword that was through his stomach. And as if the sight of the impaled guard did not freak out the other guards enough, the Spartan decloaked. Chief was holding the Energy Sword that was holding the guard in the air. Chief then grabbed the guard's arm he was crushing awhile ago, and tossed the Eclipse guard's limp body like a rag doll to the side.

The two Eclipse guards panicked and tried to aim their M-9 Avengers at hulking green figured before them.

As the guards tried to fiddle with their weapons, Shepard and Kasumi saw this as a perfect chance to take out the other two Eclipse guards. Both of them aim their Locusts at the back of the frightened Eclipse and fired away. The shots were quick, accurate, and very deadly. The eezo bullets hit the backs of their targets and quickly killed the two Eclipse guards and now the triangle was broken.

Kasumi and Shepard got out from their cover and walk toward the Spartan. Shepard closed his eyes and shook his head and let out a sigh of disappointment.

"Chief, you need to tell me when you are going to sneak off like that. It's good that you are following orders and taking out the enemy effectively, but those black op acts could get one of our teammates killed." The Commander informed.

"Duly noted, Commander." Chief said in a monotone voice. John was use to taking out the enemy without consulting with his comrades as Spartans were trained together so well, that sometimes they knew what they were going to do without informing one and another of their action. This will be no problem for Chief as he is a master of adapting.

Kasumi walked between Shepard and Chief with her hands by her side. "I don't know Shepard, I do love a man who is secretive and mysterious." Kasumi then looked at Chief with a smile. "It's very appealing."

Master Chief did not say anything, but Shepard did raise an eyebrow.

Suddenly shots were coming in the Normandy commandos' direction, and few were making contact with their shields. The three member squad quickly ran for cover by the crates again. Shepard poked his head out once he felt that it was safe enough, and got a good look of the enemies ahead. What the former Spectre saw made him groan. There were seven Eclipse troops and an YMIR heavy mech, all with their weapons raised and making their way to him and his team. Five of the seven Eclipse guards were much closer to the Normandy Commandos while the other two were with the YMIR mech in the far back of the team. The heavy mech may have been an actual killing machine, but it was so slow. The two Eclipse guards beside the mech were more than likely guarding the mech to make sure it got to its intended targets.

"Heads up! Enemies incoming!" Shepard shouted as he looked at his team again and pulled out his Locust submachine gun again.

"I guess they are sending bigger guns to take us out." Kasumi said as she also pulled out her Locust submachine gun, but then a smirk grew on her face. "I told you this would be fun, Shepard."

John looked over to the mech and could see that unless they did something fast, they were going to be in for the long haul. That YMIR was in its element since there was not enough room for him to make a move to take it out and engaging it was not a viable option. The only way out was to somehow take out the mech or turn it against the Eclipse forces. That was when Cortana decided to get into the act as she spoke directly to John and due to her being able to speak to him through the neural link, no one else with him, meaning Shepard and Kasumi would know that his long time A.I partner was in on the action.

"John, I have an idea on how to turn that YMIR around."

"Attacking it is out of the question Cortana."

"I know, but I can hack into it and turn it around to take out those Eclipse right on the mark, all you need to do is get me close and allow me to download myself into it."

John covered as a stray mass accelerator slug passed overhead and he spoke as he fired his current weapon, a Covenant Beam Rifle and killing the Eclipse soldier taking the offending shot at him. And he casually replied to that suggestion as he let his weapon cool down from his recent shot.

"How do you propose I do that?"

"I've read up on the data concerning YMIR mech sensors, and I have figured out just what sort of wavelengths their scanners can work with and what they can't, even visual sensors to boot. If we tune it

into that set of wavelengths, then have those wavelengths mix with your MJOLNIR's shields, then we can make you virtually invisible to said sensors and allow you to get close to that machine. There's two weaknesses to it though, obviously this stealth shield only works on YMIR mechs and as such, other enemies can still see you, and the second is that the stealth shield can only last for a full minute before it is broken up in the shield's energy field. I can do it again if we need to though I think that improved sensors on other YMIR models might be able to counter it."

Commander Shepard was getting quite agitated in his predicament. The enemies ahead were firing their weapons non-stop to obviously pin down him and his team. The Commander silently congratulated his foes as it was a smart plan. The Eclipse would keep wasting their ammunition, but it would make him, Chief and Kasumi not move anywhere and with that the Eclipse would move up on them as they kept shooting and eventually catch up to them and lay them to waste. He was going over several plans and strategies in his mind to try and take out the advancing battle group before him, but none were good enough to succeed without anyone getting hurt or killed.

"Commander." John-117 said over the gunfire.

"What is it, Master Chief?" Shepard said while looking him in the visor.

"I have an idea to deal with the heavy mech, but I will need you to cover me."

"Is it like the last time you dealt with a mech?" Shepard mentioned as he recalled the brawl between Chief and an YMIR mech while recruiting Jack.

"No." The Spartan simply said.

"Well then, I am open to ideas."

"I believe I have the distraction you need, Chief." Kasumi said as she was listening in to the two soldiers' conversation. The thief then pulled out a yellow-white round object. "This is a flashbang grenade, it should blind and disorientate the trigger happy guards ahead."

Chief looked at the flashbang grenade in Kasumi's hand. If it was like the ones in his universe, then the grenade should indeed buy him some time to reach the heavy mech.

"Alright, let's do this!" Shepard declared.

Kasumi primed the flashbang grenade and threw it over the crates that they were hiding behind. In a few seconds the grenade went off and let out a concussive roar and a blinding flash of light that caused the Chief's visor to automatically darken to protect his eyes.

As soon as the grenade detonated, Chief quickly but quietly ran from the crates. The Spartan pulled out his Plasma Rifle from his side, just in case he had to dispose of any enemies very quickly that has detected him. Rounding a corner, the Chief ducked into an alcove to make sure no Eclipse guards would detect him. Poking his head out of the corner, he saw the YMIR Heavy Mech slowly walking towards Shepard

and Kasumi with heavy mechanical footsteps. Two human guards in suits patrolled behind the mech, more than likely to use the mech as a shield. Neither appeared to be paying much attention.

Chief quietly slipped out of the alcove and crept to a point where the guards' paths overlapped each other. As soon as they met up, the Chief grabbed their heads and quickly twisted. Two cracks and both fell down.

Walking up to the mech, John smacked the back of it to gain its attention.

The YMIR heavy mech spun around but only to find a glowing blue gauntlet was placed on the center of its face.

Time slowed down for John as he placed Cortana on the face of the mech. The familiar sensation of liquid nitrogen seeping out of his head assailed the Chief's senses but soon abated. The mech was frozen within its place. Then the red glowing marks that ran on the mech digitally, changed to a light bluish color. The YMIR mech turned to face the remaining Eclipse guards ahead. The mech moved its mini-gun and rocket launcher into ready positions.

"It's a little bulky, but I think I can make it work. A girl does have to accessorize." Cortana joked through the hacked mech that was now fighting for the Spartan.

Shepard rose up from his cover and unleashed a hail of bullets from his Locust sub-machinegun at a foolish Eclipse Guard that was standing up out of cover. The mass accelerator bullets quickly collided with the Eclipse and just as quickly killed him.

Shepard sat down behind his cover to reload his weapon with another thermal clip. As soon as the ex-Spectre put a thermal clip in the Locust, he took a deep breath to get himself ready for another move of getting out of cover to shoot at someone. But then he heard screams coming from the Eclipse guards.

"What the hell?" Kasumi spoke as she with no doubt heard the screams.

Both of them poked their heads out to what was the commotion.

What the commotion was that they saw the heavy mech shooting its own troops with its mini-gun arm. This mech looked different from the usual YMIR mechs. The red lines that ran along the inside of it were now some sort of blue color.

There was no cover for the Eclipse guards so it was a slaughter fest when the mech started to shoot its rapid-fire minigun arm.

The mech let loose a hail of bullets with its mini-gun arm on one of the Eclipse guards, which quickly killed him. The mech then switched to its rocket arm and aimed it at the Eclipse. It shot the rocket and then the rocket made contact with a guard. The blast radius of the rocket took out two Eclipse guards.

Shepard and Kasumi moved around to see the mess as John quickly holstered his Plasma Rifle and they were impressed as John's move had turned the mech to their side in no time flat. The machine in

question was now offline and they were free to move, but Shepard had more questions in his head now concerning their companion. He had read enough to know that the Chief was invaluable as an ally, but to do that to an active mech was something he had never seen before.

Usually the only way to hack a Mech was when it was inactive, but somehow the Master Chief was able to hack it while it was ACTIVE and somehow managed to avoid not only catching the attention of the Mech, but the Eclipse forces as well. That was a feat that would have been thought of being only possible in a movie vid, but this guy without any active stealth and wearing an armor system that defied most if not all combat hardsuit designs did it.

And he wanted to know how it was done.

Kasumi likewise thought in the same lines though for a different reason than Shepard. She wanted to know just how he was able to avoid being shot by mechs while being out in the open. That was a very strange but interesting technique in the mind of the Japanese thief and could be a real aid in the long run, plus she had to admit that despite her being wary of the seven foot tall armored giant of a man, she would not mind having him watch her back...though she was curious just what he looked like underneath the armor he wore. While she was waiting for the Normandy ship to arrive at Hock's mansion, she was able to hear some rumors amongst the crew. She had heard rumors about how some of the ladies...even the XO Miranda had seen the Spartan in the buff, and they apparently LIKED what they saw, at least that was what she heard.

As both arrived to face the Spartan, Shepard spoke first.

"Nice work Chief...now do you mind explaining HOW you did that?"

"Yeah, that was one heck of a trick big guy, even I was impressed, and that does not happen often in my line of work."

John then decided to 'lie' as it were to Commander Shepard to protect Cortana. Lying to a superior officer was a serious offense in the UNSC and Chief Mendez would have his hide, but he was also taught by said Chief that in order to keep some secrets, lying was allowed as long as it was done with some grains of truth in it. Not to mention to protect vital data and he had done this before when he was asked by others about the Spartan II Program to keep details of it away even after it went public, namely the more serious details.

"One of my augmentations deals with an enhanced memory, reflexes and creativity Commander, I did some reading on how to hack mechs and computers back on the Normandy and did some reading on how YMIRs work so I would find alternative means to fight them should hand to hand combat or fire power not be possible. Besides, at least it was not a brawl this time."

Shepard was not all that sold, but decided not to go further in the conversation...yet.

"Come on, we have to still get out of here." Shepard said while running with Kasumi and Chief not too far behind.

As the trio was running down the garage, Hock's voice came on the intercom.

"They're out of the vault. Seal them in!" Hock commanded.

Normally a large hangar door would have activated and sealed off Shepard and his team in the hangar, but Hock's orders were not followed through. Shepard, Kasumi, and Chief did pause though, to see if anything would happen.

"What the hell is this? Why is the vault door not working? Someone answer me damn it!" Hock barked.

"Looks like someone is a little cranky when their toys don't work." Cortana spoke inside of Master Chief's helmet.

"How are you doing this?" Chief replied.

"Remember when I told you to place me in the terminal, when we were in the security room? Well I messed with their systems, reset their passwords, and lock them out of their own terminals and systems. Now nobody, not even Hock has control of the doors, lifts, and etc. I can re-activate everything, but you would have to get me to a terminal. I also downloaded the schematics of the mansion. I will display it in your HUD for when you need it."

"Good job."

"It's about time I get a complement out of you. Now before you proceed down the hangar, take a right through the door on the side. There is something that will help us get through this mansion a lot easier."

The Spartan was soon brought out of his talk with Cortana as Kasumi started to speak herself.

"I wonder why Hock's doors aren't working? I didn't do any sort of sabotage for the doors or anything." Kasumi then looked at Shepard. But Shepard nodded his head no. Kasumi then looked at Chief.

"Chief, do have anything to do with this?"

John had to lie again to protect Cortana, so the Spartan nodded his head yes.

"I was able to lock Hock out of his systems when I was in the security room. I thought it would help, though he is still control of the intercoms." John lied.

"Is there anything you can't do?" Kasumi teased with a big grin on her lips.

"Let's get moving. We still have to get to the shuttle at the landing pad." Shepard informed as he started to head through the hallway.

"Commander, I believe I saw something that will help us. It's a click on the right." Chief said as he pointed at a door that was beside them. (This is the door you go through, when Hock seals you off from the hangar.)

So the group went back and through the door, but once they got through the door they saw a scary but also a relieving sight. Before them was eight deactivated YMIR heavy mechs lined up in a row of four with one mech above each one. The Normandy commandos walked up to the non-moving mechs.

"John, if I am thinking what you are thinking then I love what you are thinking." Kasumi said with a hand on her hip and a smirk on her face.

"You were right Kasumi. This is fun." Shepard also smirked and folded his arms across his chest.

The Master Chief walked up to the heavy mech on the far right, and placed a glowing blue hand on the face of the mech and he did the same thing with the one on top and the next one on the left and so on and so on.

Each of the eight YMIR mechs then came to life with glowing blue lines on them, like the last heavy mech the Spartan hacked. Hock has no idea what is coming.

Aieran Vierokan an Asari Commando's POV

Aieran Vierokan is an Asari Commando in her Maiden years. Aieran is a spectacular marksman and a powerful biotic, as well as a born leader. She is very intelligent as well as resourceful and able to complete her jobs with satisfactory results. She is very is skilled with assault rifles, as well as moderately skilled with most other weapons.

Aieran has the soft, graceful curves shared with most of her race, with a delicately beautiful appearance with her light blue skin. She wears the traditional Asari Commando Black, unmarked Duelist light armor.

Aieran joined the Asari Commandos on Illium sixty years before, driven by a desire to see the universe. She has seen battle on countless fronts on countless worlds and won all of them. She is usually leading squads and teams with impressive tactics and clever strategies. She led an Asari Commando team, but eventually decided to abandon them since they don't see as much action as she would like. Aieran Vierokan is highly recommended by many people looking for a gun, and lately she has been working freelance at a high price for her services.

Donovan Hock caught wind of her reputation and has asked her to help with security at his mansion during a party. At first she did not want to do the job as simply working security for a party full of rich people. But when she learned the guest list was full of crooks and murders that was likely that a few people wanted them dead, she agreed since a party was a great time for someone to assassinate their enemies when their guard is down. So she agreed, hoping to see some action... and the pay wasn't bad either.

Aieran was currently in the garage, watching how Hock's guards were getting ready for the intruders. The Asari was sitting on a crate, with a bored expression on her light blue face. She was stationed towards the end of the garage. The garage was very large, capable of

fitting tanks, aircraft, and more large objects in the room all at once. But in the room was numerous LOKI mechs that were deactivated and stacked up on racks and crates were also scattered around. The crates were excellent positions for cover, in case of a firefight. Behind her was a room with a few Mako Grizzly tanks (not the tanks from Halo Wars but from Mass Effect) and a large amount of metal crates for transportation on the landing platform which was behind that room. No doubt the gunships, tanks, and crates were used for Hock's smuggling operations and other illegal purposes.

The Asari Commando let out a sigh.

"_Hock has an army under his control but he doesn't even use it. It's time I take control and get rid of these intruders." _Aieran thought to herself.

She got off the crate she was sitting on and pulled out her assault rifle in her arms, the M-76 Revenant. She fired off a round from her gun, which caught everyone's attention.

"Alright everyone listen up! The intruders are on their way here! There is only one way out and that is through us!" A devious grin grew on the Asari's face. "So let's give them a good taste of hell before they leave!"

Aieran took a breath and let a plan form in her head. She then started to point at some of the guards.

"I want you guys to activate all of the LOKI mechs. From what I heard, we can't activate them remotely since the terminals are down. So we have to activate them manually. We are going to throw everything we have at the intruders."

The Eclipse troops nodded and said "yes ma'am" and got right to work.

Aieran pointed at another trooper.

"You! I need you to gather up everyone of Hock's personal. Not just troopers, but engineers, butlers and whatever. It's time they get off their lazy asses and help us out!"

"Right away ma'am" The Eclipse troop screamed out. He then ran to follow out his orders, but not without stumbling after hearing the Asari bark orders.

The Commando then pointed to two Eclipse guards.

"I need you two to gather up all weapons and arm the people that the troop is bringing! Some of them might not have training, but this will be a good first time for them."

Aieran pointed to another group of troops.

"I need you guys to go activate the Grizzly tanks in the room behind us. If they somehow manage to push us back, we will need a plan B."

The Asari then pointed to three Eclipse guards.

"I want you three to go on recon, and find where the enemy is! The second you see them report back to me! Don't get ballsy and try to take them out, understand!"

"Yes ma'am!" The troops said with a little fear in each of their voices from hearing the commanding tone.

Aieran then looked at all of the other Eclipse guards in the large garage.

"I want the rest of you whelps, to arm up and get in positions! That is behind the crates, or anything that you can take cover behind! Now get to it!" Aieran screamed.

"If any of you wanted to see the intruders up close, then this is your lucky break!" The Asari Commando barked. _"We are ready for anything that the intruders can throw at us."_ Aieran thought with a smirk on her face.

Oh how wrong, she was.

Laterâ€¦

The LOKI mechs were activated, the tanks in the back room were prepped and primed. All of Hock's personal were in the garage and armed with various weapons, and the Eclipse troops that were assigned duties, were now back and ready to fight. All except the recon team.

"Where is the recon team? They should have reported back now! The enemy shouldn't even be that far from our position!"

Suddenly, Aieran got her answer. An Eclipse body flew through the front entrance and landed at Aieran's feet. The Asari looked at the body and saw that it was burnt all over, riddled with bullets that ooze with blood. Whoever this guy fought, he did not fight them for long.

"_I told them not to be ballsy."_ Aieran thought to herself.

Then eight missiles came out of the entrance of the garage. One missile collided with a crate at the front of the entrance that was covering three Eclipse guards, destroying it to pieces. Another missile hit the three guards that were hiding behind the crate, sending their bodies flying and screaming in agony.

Aieran gritted her teeth in anger. Already the intruders are getting the drop on them, but the Asari failed to see a missile going straight towards her.

Aieran looked and saw the missile with a shocked look on her face. The missile made contact. Aieran's shields were gone and she was on the ground in a daze. The Asari Commando lifted her head to see what was going on. Her ears were ringing from the explosion of the missile, so all could hear were muffled and a ringing. Her vision was blurry at first, but she quickly regained focus. But the sight in front of her was pure chaos. There were eight YMIR heavy mechs out and slaughtering her forces. A few things were wrong with these mechs though.

1. Why were they attacking her and all of her forces?
2. Why were there blue lines on the heavy mechs, instead of the red ones?

Aieran got up with a grunt and picked up her Revenant assault rifle that fell on the ground when she fell. She was not wounded badly, if anything it would be a bruise. Her shields took most of the rocket blast, and her shields were now recharging. Time seemed to be slowing down for her as she saw the war that was commencing in the garage. It was one of those moments in a battle after a traumatic experience that time seems like it slows down for you to see what was going on around you.

Aieran looked around at the carnage that was happening before her. She saw a three man group of Eclipse Guards running from one of the strange YMIR heavy mechs, but their running was futile as they were gunned down by the mini-gun attachment to the heavy mech. The rounds piercing their armor and sending them tumbling to the ground only to never get up again.

Aieran looked around some more and saw that two LOKI mechs were shooting at the back of a heavy mech, but their mere side arm weapons barely did any damage to the corrupted YMIR mech. The heavy mech turned around and aimed its rocket arm at the two LOKI mechs. The heavy mech shot the rocket at the two mechs and blew them apart. The heavy mech then moved on, looking for more targets.

An Eclipse guard then tried to test his luck by hitting a heavy mech with the butt of his assault rifle. His efforts were in vain as it only slightly damaged the heavy mech. The heavy mech used its mini-gun arm and hit the Eclipse guard in the stomach. The mech then raised the Eclipse guard high in the air with the mini-gun arm and slammed the guard violently back to the ground with a loud thud. To make sure that the Eclipse guard was dead, the heavy mech fired its mini-gun arm that was still in the stomach of the Eclipse guard.

The Asari commando then saw a sight that surprised her, ahead were the three intruders. One was a woman in skintight black and white clothes with a hood, and what looked like one of Hock's Locust weapons from his vault was in her hands. Aieran could only guess that the only lady in the group must be Kasumi Goto that Donovan Hock was talking about over the intercom. Hock said he wanted Kasumi alive, but with all the hell that was going on, that option might not be available.

Aieran watched as the hooded woman aimed her Locust and walk towards a group of five Eclipse Guards and a Loki mech that were shooting at a YMIR heavy mech. The woman fired a few rounds at an Eclipse guard, and then a few more rounds at another, quickly dropping them. The three remaining guards and the mech spun around.

"Shoot her!" One of the guards shouted.

The guards and the mech all released a burst of mass effect rounds from their assault rifles at the lady, but they all missed as Kasumi ran to the side and quickly disappeared out of thin air. The guards kept their guns up and surveyed the place while they slowly walk around to cover more ground. The mech just kept its aim where the hooded woman disappeared.

"Where did she go?" One of the guards whispered.

Then as if answering his question, Kasumi suddenly appeared behind a guard and hit him with a Shadowstrike, killing him instantly. She quickly turned around and sent a jab to a guard behind her and then Kasumi quickly kicked him at the left knee, the blow was enough to make him land on his knees in pain with Kasumi quickly grabbing his extended arm and landing a nerve strike on a bundle of nerve to make his arm go numb as she quickly launched an uppercut to the chin and followed it with a roundhouse kick to the side of the man's ribs, sending the guard to the ground. Once the guard was down, Kasumi pulled out her pistol with incredible speed and just as fast pulled the trigger and shot the last guard in the head. The mech finally started to shoot at Kasumi, but before he could actually hit her Kasumi turned and shot out an Overcharge from her Omni-tool. The Overcharge hit the mech and disabled it.

A smirk grew on the thief's hooded face. She then pulled out a flash grenade and threw it at another group of Eclipse guards. She pulled out her Locust and started to move towards the next unfortunate group of Eclipse guards.

Aieran hated to admit, but she was impressed by the thief Kasumi, hopefully Hock won't be too disappointed that she kills the thief instead of letting her live. She could just say that it would be cheaper to have the hooded woman to be dead than alive, and then Hock would probably understand like the selfish rich man he is.

The Asari Commando then looked to the right to see a man with short cropped hair, a few facial scars, and wearing an Onyx colored and red colored N7 armor. Aieran could have sworn that he looked a lot like the dead Commander Shepard, but she did hear some rumors of him being alive somehow. Some people have been posing as Commander Shepard for a few reasons, but this guy looked like the real deal.

The so called 'Shepard' was armed with an M-27 Scimitar Assault Shotgun and he was charging towards a group of four LOKI mechs and four Eclipse guards. Three Eclipse guards were lined up together and the other Eclipse guard was in front of the four LOKI mechs. All eight of Hock's troops saw Shepard and were shooting at him, though ran up and took cover behind a crate. Shepard shot out a biotic pull that went around the crate he was hiding behind and right at three of the Eclipse guards at a really fast speed. The biotic attack sent the three guards helplessly in the air floating and wailing their arms around. Shepard got out and shot each guard once with his shotgun, which caused them to stop moving all together.

Shepard then bent down slightly on his knees in a stance to get ready for what looked like the Biotic move Charge. The blue biotic energy enveloped Shepard, and then he launched himself with a blue streak behind him, at the Eclipse guard. Shepard slammed into the Eclipse with the powerful biotic power. The Charge sent the guard flying with his body going limp. Then with amazing speed, Shepard pulled out his shotgun and started to blast each LOKI mech at a very close distance. Each mech was on the ground with a few mechanical limbs missing from being up close to a shotgun blast.

Shepard then turned and released a Biotic Shockwave at three Eclipses who were shooting at a YMIR heavy and taking cover behind a crate.

The shockwave hit the guards and sent them over the crate, but it did not kill them. Instead it left them lying on the ground in the open range of the corrupted YMIR heavy and its mini-gun arm. The YMIR heavy mech showed no mercy on the downed guards at it each one while they were on the ground continuously. The guards' armor was filled with burnt holes, and they never got back up.

There was no doubt in Aieran's mind that person was the real Commander Shepard, no poser could replicate those moves. Each accurate shot, technique, and move was all taught from the N7 Human Alliance Special Operations. Few were in it, but most knew that Commander Shepard was one of them. Shepard was the every bit of badass that she heard about. She did hear some rumors that Shepard was working with Cerberus. The question that Aieran was asking herself was,

"_How is Shepard alive? What does he have to do with Hock? Why would Shepard be working with Cerberus?" _

Suddenly there was an explosion nearby. Aieran frantically looked around to see what caused the boom but all she saw some pink mist that burned in the air and then vaporized after a few seconds.

"_Now what could possibly cause some random pink mist?"_

The Asari's question was answered when she heard another explosion that sounded similar to the one she heard earlier. Remains of an Eclipse guard were on the ground with a pink mist around the body. Aieran looked to see where the body flew but only saw another Eclipse guard but he was alive, limping but alive. Strangely there was a pink glowing needle object embed in the guard's side. Then two more needles struck the back of the Eclipse guard and he exploded in a pink mist.

That was when Aieran saw it. A tall heavily armed thing in dark green armor with a golden visor, that she has never seen before was using some sort of strangle looking rifle with pink needles sticking out of it. The green figure attached the strange rifle to its back and pulled out a small unknown blue curved weapon from its side. The green giant then sprinted at an amazing speed towards some Eclipse guards and LOKI mechs while firing some strange glowing energy from the small blue weapon. The rounds that the strange blue weapon shot were blue and energy like but looked not quite like eezo rounds. When the blue rounds made contact with Eclipse guards, it seemed like the strange energy just burn through their armor and into their bodies, which killed them quickly.

Who or what was this armored killing machine that was slaughtering her troops? Was it some sort of human as it had the human body shape, and it looked too bulky to look Asari? Maybe this was the merc leader named Soloman Gunn as the only male with them was the famous Commander Shepard?

The seven foot green armor thing rammed into an Eclipse guard, which sent the unfortunate guard flying with his body bent at a weird angle. The green thing then sent a kick to a Loki mech in the chest area. Instead of the Loki mech simply falling down and absorbing the blow, the mech's upper chest was ripped off from its legs and was flying the in the air in pieces. The green armored thing then turned and grabbed a Loki mech's head, and then crushed it while ripping it

off from its body. When the green armor thing ripped the Loki mech's head off that caused him to elbow the Eclipse guard behind him. The Eclipse guard's helmet was shattered and no doubt that his jaw was shattered too after seeing how strong this thing was. The stranger pulled out its blue weapon and shot the nearest Eclipse guard with rapid fire. The strange energy that looked like plasma burned through the armor and into the flesh just like the others. The armored behemoth continued to shoot at more mechs and guards that were ahead.

Aieran was dumbstruck to say the least. She has never encountered a being like the green armored thing with a golden faceplate. The seven foot mystery object moved faster than any other Drell, was stronger than any Krogan, armor that surpassed than any Quarian, and had far more advance weapons than any Geth.

"_Is it one of Cerberus's crazy experiments?" _Aieran thought.

The Asari ran strategies and scenarios in her head, but she could not think of a way to stop a team that seemed to be well unstoppable. Despite all of the deaths, explosions, and the losing, the commando smiled. Aieran loved a challenge that pushed her to her limit. She loved the adrenaline and fun of a tough battle that came with surprises of an unplanned battle. This made victory taste ever so sweet.

Six Eclipse guards ran up behind Aieran with their Avenger assault rifles in their aimed her Revenant weapon at the nearest YMIR heavy mech and started to shoot. The other Eclipse guards followed Aieran's action and started to shoot their assault rifles at the same heavy mech as well.

The heavy mech turned to face its oppressors, but its shields quickly went down from the hail of eezo rounds. The heavy mech shot its mini-gun arm, which successfully hit one of the Eclipse guards.

Aieran and the Eclipse guards kept firing their weapons, despite the fact they lost of their own already. Aieran started to run at the heavy mech. As the Asari was running, she started to glow blue and used her biotics to throw a large crate at the heavy mech. The crate made impact with heavy mech's legs which sent the mech on the ground with its back on the ground.

Aieran ran and jumped on the fallen heavy mech. When Aieran was at the head of mech, she aimed her Revenant at the head and pulled the trigger while letting out a scream with each round that was automatically shot. After hearing the satisfying sound of the heavy mech dying, Aieran leaped off the mech and walked away as the mech exploded. Happy with her kill, a smirk grew on the Asari's face. The Commando looked to her right to see a large group of Eclipse guards and LOKI mechs killing a heavy mech. They may have put a dent in the intruder's forces, but she knew that was not enough.

"Fall back! To the end of the garage!" Aieran shouted to the rest of her forces.

All Eclipse guards started to sprint to where their Asari Commando told them to go. Majority of the LOKI mechs followed as well, but some got shot and destroyed along the way as they were to slow.

Aieran, the Eclipse guards, and the LOKI mechs all retreated back to their plan B room where the Grizzly Mako tanks, gunships, and other illegal treasures were. Aieran was just surprised that the intruders were capable of pushing her forces to their plan B room.

The plan B room seemed like an excellent area to holdout from the heavy mechs. There was a Mako Grizzly tank cannon aimed at the only entrance of the Plan B room. There were bombs and explosive coils lying around to use as traps against on approaching enemies or to simply throw at enemies with biotics. There were also large metallic grates that were being held high in the air by cranes that could be used to drop on unsuspecting enemies. Not to mention that there were excellent positions and cover ground that were excellent to take cover behind.

Aieran was happy to see Eclipse guards were behind some crates, boxes, and other positions for cover. Most of the Eclipse guards were up and had their weapons prepped and aimed at the only entrance while the LOKI mechs were simply standing around but still had their small fire arms aimed at the entrance. As soon as Aieran entered the plan B room, she screamed at someone to get at the cannon of the Mako Grizzly tank that was aimed at the entrance of the room.

When someone got on the Mako Grizzly tank cannon, Aieran herself got into cover. She was positioned alongside most of the troops but she had a great view of the entrance where she can pick off and damage anyone that passed through.

The passing moments on waiting for one of the enemy heavy mechs or intruders to walk through the entrance were stressful. Everyone was really tense and nervous as they heard constant heavy mechanized footsteps and cooling systems of the YMIR coming towards them. They were worried that if any of them would survive as YMIR mechs were pretty tough and the intruders just cut through the first few platoons like they were nothing. Their fingers were shaking on the triggers as they were eager to pull, so they could hopefully survive the deadly battle that was inevitable to miss.

The sound of the LOKIs' pistols going and the YMIR heavy mechs' rapid fire from their mini-gun arm going off, broke the tension. The LOKI mechs were being gunned down by the YMIR mechs as one by one they slowly walked in, but they served as an excellent purpose of being distractions.

"Everyone shoot! Shoot whatever goddamn gun you have!" Aieran shouted when she saw a great opportunity to take out the corrupted YMIR mechs. All of the Eclipse guards obeyed the Asari Commando and fired their guns at one heavy mech. The heavy mech they focused on did not live long as the shields quickly went down and the armor did not survive from all of the concentrated rounds. The heavy mech was soon looking like Swiss cheese as it was covered with bullet holes before it exploded from its automatic self-destruct.

All of the corrupted YMIR mechs aimed their rocket arms and fired at the Eclipse guards' positions. The rockets collided with some guards but most of them hit boxes and crates as the rockets were used to get the Eclipse out of cover and make them disorganized.

"Now! Shoot now!" Aieran shouted at the Eclipse guard that was manning the Mako Grizzly tank cannon.

The guard at the Mako Grizzly tank aimed the cannon at one of the heavy mechs. Once he was aligned with a YMIR mech in sights, he fired. The cannon let out a deafening blast and smoke from the barrel and also a deadly blast. The blast hit a heavy mech, destroying it instantly. The guard at the cannon let out a cheer for his kill, but it was short lived as an YMIR mech shot its own rocket. The guard did not know what hit him as the rocket killed him on impact.

"Dammit!" Aieran swore at losing a valuable resource in taking out the heavy mechs quickly.

Things were going from bad to worse for the Asari Commando as her troops and mechs were now scattered and being killed like the platoon from before and now she lost her guy on the Mako Grizzly tank.

"Well if you wanna do something right, you gotta do it yourself." Aieran muttered to herself as she got up and got ready to engage some corrupted heavy mechs.

Aieran looked ahead and saw a few LOKI mechs being killed by an YMIR heavy mech's mini-gun while a few Eclipse guards were shooting at the corrupted heavy mech. What the heavy mech didn't know that it was directly under a large metal crate that was being held in the air by a crane. The Asari smirked and aimed her Revenant at the crane. With a few rounds shot at the crane, the crane lost its grip of the metal crate. The heavy metal crate fell and crushed the YMIR mech.

Aieran mentally celebrated her victory over the deceased heavy mech, but that celebration was cut short when the Asari's shields were taking damage from another YMIR heavy mech's mini-gun arm. Aieran quickly rolled to the side behind some cover of crates. The Commando swore as she realized that her energy shields were more than seventy-five percent gone and the crate she was hiding behind was slowly being destroyed as the heavy mech fired at her position.

Aieran was getting nervous, the heavy mech continued to keep firing at the Asari's position and her crate was getting torn piece by piece every time a round hit the crate plus her shields have not fully recharge from the damage she taken. Aieran took a deep breath to calm herself and then looked to her left, her eyes widen at what she saw. There before her were a few highly explosive containers, and then a plan formed in her head.

The heavy mech stopped firing its mini-gun to let it cool down. Seeing it as a good opportunity, Aieran popped out of cover and shot the YMIR mech with a biotic Warp and released a hail of bullets from her Revenant. Luckily for the Asari, a few surviving LOKI mechs were shooting the heavy mech with Aieran so the shields of the heavy mech were going down faster. Once Aieran felt that the enemy was weak enough, she gripped the explosive containers with her biotics and then threw them at the YMIR mech. The containers flew through the air and then hit the heavy mech, exploding on impact. Once the smoke was gone, the heavy mech was only in parts.

"Five down, three to go plus three pesky intruders." Aieran muttered to herself.

The few Eclipse guards that Aieran saved earlier came running to

Aieran's side. There were four of them.

"Nice job on the kills ma'am, but the enemy forces are still wiping us out." The Eclipse guard pointed at something in the hangar. Aieran looked to where the guard was pointing.

She saw the former Spectre Shepard leading two YMIR mechs. After seeing Commander Shepard kill a group of Eclipse guards and LOKI mechs by himself, the Asari was worried what he could accomplish with two heavy mechs. Unfortunately for Aieran, her fears were to come to life. She saw Shepard point at a position where a small group of five Eclipse guards were hiding behind a small weak crate and that four LOKI mechs were standing at. Shepard did some strange hand signals that must have made sense to the blue lined YMIR mechs. The heavy mechs aimed their rocket arms at the Eclipse and smaller mechs. Aieran watched as the heavy mechs shot their rockets, and the rockets flew to their targets. The rockets blew up the crates and the LOKI mechs. The Eclipse guards did not fare any better than the LOKI mechs as their bodies were on the ground with their armor smoking and burnt.

The Eclipse guard then pointed to the other corrupted heavy mech, except behind the mech was the thief Kasumi Goto. Kasumi had Hock's Locust out and she was behind the blue lined heavy mech, using it as cover. The thief was firing her Locust and walking at the same pace of the mech, as the mech itself fired its min-gun arm mowing down many Eclipse and LOKI mechs.

"I think we are one of the last ones left, ma'am." The Eclipse guard said with depression, to the Asari Commando.

Suddenly a blue plasma bolt hit the Eclipse guard that Aieran was just talking to, square in the face. The plasma attack knocked the guard down, melting his helmet and face away. Aieran ducked to hopefully avoid any plasma fire that was heading her way. Fortunately for the Asari Commando, no plasma bolts were heading her way, but she did see the other five Eclipse guards that she was standing by get pelted with the blue plasma. Their armor couldn't hold out against the deadly heat of the strange blue plasma that melted their armor.

Aieran had a good hunch where the attack was coming from. Her hunch was correct as she traced who was shooting at her comrades: the giant green intruder. Aieran saw that the golden visor stranger smack down a LOKI mech and then stomped on its torso, crushing it in pieces.

Aieran was pissed, she has had it with who she guessed was Soloman Gunn. Her body started to glow blue from her biotics, her fury only made her biotics radiate more from her body. Aieran holstered her Revenant as she wanted to crush this threat with her powerful biotic strength.

Her glowing biotic form must have caught the attention of seven foot armored menace as it looked at her with its golden visor. It then started to aim its blue gun at her and walk towards her.

Hoping to stop the behemoth, Aieran used her biotics to lift up a metal box and threw it at the green armored thing just like she did with the YMIR heavy mech. Instead of toppling the stranger down like

the heavy mech, the green armored being actually swatted the metal box with its arm which sent the box flying behind it with a rather large dent in the box. The large stranger then raised its mysterious gun and fired a few bolts at her. Aieran's shields went down after three shots. The fourth shot hit her armor, which the bolt started to eat her armor away with intense heat. The Asari was able to figure out that the green armor stranger with the golden visor was using plasma technology, something that was very effective and deadly against shields and armor.

Aieran placed her feet firmly on the ground and then released a wave of biotic energy at the green armored stranger, but what she saw next completely caught her by surprise. The green behemoth barely moved an inch when she hit it with her biotics. Aieran then let out a continuous stream of biotic energy at the golden visor intruder, but she got the same results as before. What shocked the blue colored commando even more was that the seven foot green armored intruder started to walk towards her with heavy footsteps even while she was using her biotics against it. With all of the energy built up in her, the Asari Commando let out yell and released all of her biotic energy at the walking green armored intruder. The intruder was actually pushed back a lot farther back, a smirk grew on the Asari commando's blue lips. The smirk on Aieran's blue face soon disappeared as the green armored thing did another surprising feat. The behemoth slammed its fist in the ground as it was sliding backwards and the fist embedded itself in the ground which stopped the green armored behemoth from moving. Once the strong biotic waves were over the seven foot stranger moved its fist from the ground and started to walk towards her once more though it looked like the stranger was having a tough time moving through the biotics. Aieran could feel her energy leaving her, her limbs were aching, her vision was starting to blur, her knees were starting to buckle, and she was having to take heavy breaths of air— she was feeling tired. Her biotics were getting weaker as well and she could see that the armored behemoth was able to walk through her biotics at a faster pace because of it. Aieran was a powerful biotic and she was completely shocked to see that someone like this thing before her was to actually walk through her biotics like if it was being pushed by strong waves.

When the stranger with the golden visor was getting closer to Aieran, she decided to use what little strength she had left with a biotic punch. When the green armored figure was in reaching distance, she primed her hand with her biotics which glowed brightly blue. But before she could even fully swing her fist, the green armored stranger caught her arm and then with amazing speed and strength, gripped her by the throat with the other arm and held her up in the air. Aieran grabbed the arm that was holding her neck to try and make it release her, but it was of no use as its gauntlet hand held onto to her with amazing strength. It was getting harder to breath for the Asari under the steel like grip of the behemoth.

Aieran knew that she was going to die, so as if to give her some justice somehow she looked down at the golden visor of her soon to be killer to get a good look at its true face but all she could see was a golden reflection of herself. Her golden reflection actually brought a little fear in her.

"_Cough— _Well, _cough— _what are you waiting for? _Cough— _ Do it!" Aieran screamed at the green armored being as she wanted her death to be quick and painless.

Aieran was able to look at her golden reflection for a few seconds, but what felt like hours. The green armored being that was holding the Asari by the neck, seemed like it was thinking or studying her. It then reached for some sort of handle/hilt like object on its side by the waist. The stranger flicked its arm which must have activated the handle/hilt as an energy like dual point sword suddenly appeared from the handle/hilt.

Aieran had a pretty good idea of what was going to happen next, if her thoughts were correct that the thing in the armored one's was some sort of energy sword. The Asari commando always thought that she was going to go out with a bang in a giant explosion that would take out numerous enemies or get shot several times during a huge firefight during a high stake mission or heck even dying of her thousand year lifespan has crossed her mind. But getting impaled by some sort of strange energy like sword by a highly advanced thing with superb armor and skills that surpass anything that she has come across, while on a boring security job for a rich boy and his party was a new one for the Asari. Yet despite her current situation, Aieran smirked once more. Her life was more exciting than most Asari could ever hope for.

"_It sure was one hell of a ride. I hope the Goddess got something big planned for me." _Aieran thought to herself in her final moments.

The behemoth then thrust the energy like blade into Aieran's stomach, with the tips of the blade protruding through her back. At first when the blade went through her, it was an incredible heated pain that left her breathless. Some of her purple colored blood came out of her mouth, from when her innards exploded because of the intense plasma heat from the sword. But then... there was no more pain. The Asari's body began to go numb, her vision started to blur, and she felt really cold despite being stabbed from a super hot energy sword. Aieran then started to feel very tired, she felt more tired than she did when Aieran strained herself with her biotics against the seven foot behemoth.

Aieran's life flashed before her dreary eyes. From the moment she was born with her Asari mother and Krogan father, learning basics of biotics in school, her training to be an Asari Commando, leading fellow Asari Commandos on exciting missions, becoming a freelance commando, and to this moment right now. A smile tugged at her blue lips. Aieran was quite proud of her adventurous life. Even as her body was going limp and numb, Aieran knew that she was dying... and this was what dying felt like. The Asari Commando's drowsiness finally caught up on her, and so Aieran Vierokan closed her eyes one last time. Then there was nothing.

Normal POV

Chief let the Asari's dead limp body fall from his hand when he took the Energy Sword out of her gut. The blue body fell on the ground with a thud. The Spartan stared at the first actually biotic that he came into contact with for a few seconds. The biotic gave him trouble as he was not quite use to fighting someone that had a ability to push things with some strange energy though 343 Guilty Spark used something similar on him when they were about to pre-mature fire the Halo array on the newly rebuilt Installation 04 on the Ark. The blue

biotic energy felt like walking against an extremely powerful river current that was around his whole body. Chief knew he would have to be more careful around biotics as they were a potential threat. The Asari did look like she had a hard time pushing John, but that was no surprise since the MJLONIR armor itself almost weighed a ton. Chief would look up more information about the biotics on the Codex or talk with Miranda Lawson about them since she herself said she was a talented biotic. Jack could provide valuable information about combating biotics, though talking with her might only give John a headache as crazy as she is.

"Well that was interesting." Kasumi said as she walked up with the Spartan.

Kasumi looked back and saw Commander Shepard walking up to them with the three last remaining YMIR mechs following him. The YMIR mechs still had the blue outlines, so she could tell that they were still on their side. The heavy mechs were extremely helpful during the fight as they took the brunt of the attack from Hock's troops and the heavy mechs also wiped out a great number of enemies. Even though the three out of eight mechs that survived, they looked pretty damaged from the huge firefight. Two of them were covered in small round burnt holes from the Eclipse's weapons and they were missing some pieces of their white armor on some parts. The other one did not look too badly damaged.

"Our ticket out is just ahead of us. Hock must of really wanted us to not get away if he used so many of his resources to stop of us." Shepard said as he looked at the charred remains of a LOKI mech.

"Like I said, this graybox holds vital information that could spark intergalactic war."

"We should probably get moving then. Wouldn't want Hock sending anymore forces to hold us back. " Shepard said as he turned to face Chief and Kasumi, but then he looked at the two mechs behind him. "We should leave two mechs behind to cover the entrance so no one can sneak up behind us."

"Agreed." John-117 said stoically.

"Aw, I am going to miss the rust buckets." Kasumi patted her hand on one of the YMIR mechs, to which it stood there motionlessly.

"We can't bring them anyway, they wouldn't fit in the Kodiak. The other mech can follow us to the platform as we leave." Shepard said who then told the two more badly damaged YMIR mechs to guard the entrance.

The YMIR heavy mechs complied with Shepard's orders and made their way back to the entrance to stand guard.

"Oh well, I am just glad to get the hell out of here." Kasumi said as she made her way to the final hangar door which opened up automatically to reveal the outside.

Outside in the fresh air was a large landing platform with crates, boxes, trucks and cranes lying around. Kasumi walked out on the platform looking at her surroundings, but Shepard and Chief had their

guns up and aimed while they surveyed the platform for any surprise attacks. The third YMIR mech that didn't go with the other two mechs to guard the entrance, walked behind Shepard, Chief and Kasumi like any normal heavy mech would.

It was beautiful outside. Nice warm weather with a cool breeze, the delightful scent of the ocean soaring in the air, birds flying around looking for food, the sun was setting displaying a exotic orange color in the sky of the evening time, no mercs or mechs to shoot at them, everything was quiet... too quiet.

Suddenly an A-61 Mantis Gunship flew up in the air from below the landing platform and into their line of gunship was different from the usual gunship as it was encased in a bright blue kinetic shield, flying low and swerving side to side in an aggressive flight pattern. The mass accelerator cannons rotated and pointed in their direction with a familiar hum emitting the cannons that signified that it was about to release a hail of mass accelerator rounds.

"Incoming!" Master Chief shouted.

"Move!_" _Shepard yelled

All three of the scattered for any available cover when the cannons revved up and started shooting. Bright orange bullets razed the ground where they standing on moments before. The only one to not dive for cover was the YMIR heavy mech. The corrupted heavy was far too slow to dive for cover and it was too weak from the firefight in the hangar to survive long. The mass accelerator rounds traveled along the ground and made contact with the heavy mech. The damaged shields went first quickly, and then the mass accelerator rounds tore into the mech. After a few brief seconds of absorbing the rounds, the corrupted YMIR fell to its knees and then self-destructed like all mechs do when they are defeated.

Kasumi, Shepard, and Master Chief poked their heads out of cover to look at the shield Mantis Gunship.

"You could have done this the easy way, Goto! Allow me to show you the hard way!" Hock shouted through the Mantis Gunship's speakers as he charged the cannons on the gunship to shoot it once more.

Well I hope you liked it, I worked on it for a very VERY long time. (Beta note: I second that) If you are reading this Phoneix well, I thought I put in the beta note because I thought it was pretty funny.

Next on the update list is Star Wars Hope From the Future. Then Tomb Raider: The Lost Get Found, though I may change the title but it won't be a big change, if I change it, it will be Halo/Tomb Raider: The Lost Get Found. So yeah not a big change, but I MIGHT change it so be on the lookout. I will probably post a trailer/teaser for this story and my Halo/Tomb raider: The Lost Get Found story soon, so watch out for that. I am working on a trailer/teaser for the next chapter of my Halo/Tomb Raider story but I am just having a hard time starting it, just wondering what I should write for the first part but I do have a plan for what the teaser/trailer is going to be about.

**Remember to go and VOTE ON THE POLL on my profile bio page so you

can decide who will be Commander Shepard's pairing for this story. This will greatly affect the story.**

**The next chapter will be mainly about Master Chief getting to know the Normandy crew and squad members better. Some of the Master Chief and Normandy crew bonding will be aboard the Normandy, but there will also be some interacting on Omega. Shepard will be going to Omega to do some side missions that are on Mass Effect 2 so the Normandy crew will have some leisure time on Omega. So, while Shepard is doing some assignments on Omega, Chief will run into some of his own trouble and assignments. Some of the missions will be apart of Mass Effect 2 while a couple might be added or made up. Don't worry Chief will not go on the missions alone as he will have some Normandy squadmates with him that. The squadmates won't be the same squadmates on all of the assignments as they will switch with other characters on some assignments. But for the first part of the chapter, there will be the Hock and Gunship boss fight. It will be weird starting a chapter out with a heavy combat fight but it has to be done. The Horizon chapter will be happening in a few chapters or so and I have a few plans for that chapter. I just need to make sure if there is anything that should happen before Horizon like missions, side missions, character interactions, etc. I might do one about the Citadel after the Omega chapter or just go straight to Horizon. If you have any suggestions feel free to tell me about them and I will see what I can do.

**

8. Chapter 8

Alright here we are with another chapter.****

_Now I know what you guys are thinking, 'why haven't I updated my story in a long time?' Well the truth is, that I have been updating this story, and quite frequently might I add. For a long time now, I have been EXTREMELY busy rewriting this ENTIRE story. I looked back at my old chapters and thought, 'Wow these chapters are terrible!'

_

_So I went back and rewrote every single chapter that I ever posted in this story, along with some chapters from my Halo/Tomb Raider crossover, but that's a different issue. I improved all of the grammar, character dialogue, action, description, basically everything.

_

_I also added entirely new things to each and every chapter to spice things up and encourage you to re-read them. Here are some, but not all of the new things added to each chapter: a Halo 4 weapon has been added to Chief's arsenal, there is a conversation between the Illusive Man and the Master Chief, and so much more!

_

_All in all I really hope you go back and re-read the chapters, for I worked VERY hard with each and every one of them, except maybe chapter 1 since it is a retelling of Halo 3's ending and we all know how that goes. I promise that you will like the chapters way better than their predecessors.

_

_Okay now on the voting polls for who gets to be paired up with Commander Shepard in this story! In first we have Tali vas Normandy! Congrats Tali-mancers for picking her to be in the lead! And in a close second, we have the future Shadow Broker, Liara T'Soni! This is

already getting ideas in my head how the romance will go with Shepard in the story. Thanks everyone for voting, I will keep the voting poll open in my profile for a bit longer, so be sure to vote while you can! Shepard's love life depends on it!**_**

I would also like to give a huge shout out to Freedom Guard and afraidtochange for greatly helping me out with this chapter and the rewriting process. I wouldn't have gotten this far without you guys. Be sure to check out their work whenever you can, they are amazing writers.****

Now on with the story! This picks up right where we left off last time, where Commander Shepard, Master Chief, and Kasumi are escaping Hock's mansion from Kasumi's loyalty mission after they got the greybox. ****

Disclaimer: I don't own Halo or Mass Effect. Halo belongs to 343 Industries now, Mass Effect belongs to Bioware.****

Chapter eight**: **Can't leave without saying goodbye

Donovan Hock's landing platform

Outside in the fresh air was a large landing platform with crates, boxes, trucks and cranes lying around. Kasumi walked out on the platform looking at her surroundings. Both Shepard and Master Chief had their guns up and aimed, while they surveyed the area for any surprise attacks. The third YMIR mech that didn't go with the other two mechs to guard the entrance, walked behind Shepard, Chief and Kasumi like any normal heavy mech would.

Their footsteps fell like hushed murmurs across the concrete as they stepped out onto the landing.

Standing still, Kasumi felt the gentle brush of the warm twilight breeze against her skin, as it stirred the edges of her hood against her cheeks. It carried on the salty, heady scents of the ocean.

"So this is what they mean when they talk about the calming sea breeze."

Her eyes turned to the horizon, where the setting sun colored the skyline an exotic spiderweb of orange and gold. Something strange struggled in her chest. This world... staring at the beautiful sky made it hard to believe that just a few steps behind her was the scene of a massacre, tainted with the stench of blood and the screams of gunfire.

Her heart panged painfully as, in her mind, she saw Keiji's face. What would it have been like, living with him somewhere where there had been no bloodshed? A place where they would have been allowed to grow old? A world without secrets like those he'd sealed away in his greybox that could potentially rip away the very fabric of society itself?

It was something she would wonder for a lifetime. That beautiful, peaceful place... was somewhere she would never reach. People like her, or Keiji or even Shepard, could never belong there, not after the things they had seen, the things they had done. Their souls had been twisted by the harsh realities of survival, they had chosen to

face the darkest parts of existence and would never again belong in such places of light.

Beautiful things like that were not made for people like her. She knew that now. So, as she stood there in the growing darkness, all she could think was it's quiet, too quiet.

Around her, she felt the very slight changing of the wind, the disturbance of air currents and her blood ran cold.

Before she could open her lips to warn the others, the dim glow of the sun was blocked by a massive, hulking shadow rising up from the platform below.

Suddenly, an A-61 Mantis Gunship flew up in the air from below the landing platform and into their line of sight. The gunship was different from the usual as it was encased in a bright blue kinetic shield, flying low and swerving side to side in an aggressive flight pattern. The mass accelerator cannons rotated and pointed in their direction, emitting a familiar hum signifying that it was about to release a hail of mass accelerator rounds.

"Incoming!" Master Chief shouted as he quickly readied his weapons.

"Move!_" _Shepard yelled.

All three Normandy commandos scattered for any available cover, while the cannons revved up and started shooting.

Bright orange bullets razed the ground where they had been standing only moments before. The only one to not dive for cover was the YMIR heavy mech. The corrupted heavy was far too slow to dive for cover and it was too weak from the firefight in the hangar to survive long. The mass accelerator rounds traveled along the ground and made contact with the heavy mech. The damaged shields went quickly, and then the mass accelerator rounds tore into the mech. After a few brief seconds of absorbing the rounds, the corrupted YMIR fell to its knees and self-destructed like all mechs do when they were defeated.

Kasumi, Shepard, and Master Chief poked their heads out of cover to look at the shielded Mantis gunship.

"You could have done this the easy way, Goto! Allow me to show you the hard way!" Hock shouted through the Mantis gunship's speakers as he charged the cannons.

A long stream of mass accelerator rounds slammed into the cover that Kasumi hid behind.

Kasumi only just managed to raise a hand to shield her eyes as another stream of rounds slammed into her cover exploding the aluminium crate. Drawing her pistol, she dragged herself frantically out of the firing line and threw herself behind the closest nearby container. This one was a lot tougher than her previous hiding place, but she knew staying there for too long under fire was a bad idea.

"We need to take that thing out!" Shepard shouted.

"I am open to any ideas here!" Kasumi yelled back over the gun fire with her ducking her hooded head a few times to avoid getting shot.

Shepard knew he had to draw Hock's attention away from Kasumi. Gritting his teeth, he drew his Locust and streaked out from behind his cover, firing a few controlled shots at the gunship's vulnerable windscreen.

However, not a single round made it any further than the Mantis' immolating kinetic barrier.

"Damn it!"

Shepard threw himself into cover again as Hock began to swerve the gunship from side to side in a wider range to avoid any attempts at targeting.

"There's no way that thing is coming down unless we take out that damn shield!" _The ex-Spectre thought.

He heard the hum of the cannons powering up and knew that fire was coming his way. Jumping to his feet, the former Spectre kept low as he rushed across the platform, feeling the ground tremor under the force of the impacting rounds that were snapping at his heels. Shepard flung himself behind a wall and felt the concrete behind his back, shudder as it was peppered with bullets.

With gritted teeth, the former Spectre popped out from his cover, and shot a few controlled, concentrated bursts from his Locust.

Hock's shielded Mantis took little damage from Shepard. An evil grin grew on the rich man's face, as he knew that the kinetic barrier would be fully recharged in a mere few seconds. He directed the gunship's belly mounted M350 mass accelerator machine guns at the one who impersonated Solomon Gunn.

Donovan Hock shot at Shepard with the gunship's weapons, but Shepard was quick to duck back into cover.

"What did you tell your friends, Miss. Goto? That you're doing this for love?"

Kasumi moved up from her cover and behind some new crates. The thief activated her omni-tool and threw an overload at the Mantis, but the attack wasn't strong enough to disable the kinetic barriers on the ship.

"Don't fight me, Kasumi. You know what happened when HE fought back." Hock taunted.

"You don't talk about Keiji like that! Murderer!" Kasumi shouted back in anger.

Suddenly, two platforms descended into the floor, and quickly brought back up four Eclipse guards each. All of them were either human or Salarian, no biotic Asari in the bunch.

"More hostiles ahead." The Spartan warned the others.

With the needle rifle held tight in his hands, John-117 rose up from his cover and fired off three needle rounds at a mercenary. All three pink needles were embedded in the chest and waist of a merc. A few seconds afterwards, the Eclipse soldier was consumed in a haze of pink mist.

Fortunately another mercenary was close enough to the pink explosion, where the corrosive powder started to eat away at yellow armor and skin. The man screamed in agonizing pain from the intense heat that ate at his body. The Master Chief was quick enough to end the Eclipse's suffering, shooting the merc in the helmet with a pink needle.

The rest of the Eclipse mercenaries scattered for cover behind metallic crates and boxes, though one did not get far as it was shot down by Shepard's kassa locust. All of the mercs began to shoot their own guns at the Normandy squad members. The Eclipse troops were only able to hit at the shields of the team a few times, but there was no real harm done.

As the gunfire flew overhead, Shepard switched from the rapid firing Locust to something with extra punch, he quickly stood up and shot his M-6 carnifex pistol at the head of a mercenary. The Eclipse troop went down, and the former Spectre turned his attention to another merc. Two rounds from the heavy pistol slammed into the Eclipse's armor, but it only wounded him.

The mercenaries turned their focus on Shepard, and fired at him. He instantly took cover behind some metallic crates.

"Four left!" The hero of the Blitz shouted over the endless, booming rhapsody of gunfire.

Shepard aimed his heavy pistol at the nearest battling merc, but it was then that he felt the impact of a shell on his shoulder guard and realised that his shields had been taken out.

Dropping back behind the metal tank to slam his last thermal clip into his gun, he called out,

"We need to finish this quickly!"

"Lay down your weapons! There is no where you can run." Hock announced over the loud speakers on the gunship.

"I'd rather die!" Kasumi rebutted to the man she hated the most throughout the galaxy.

"So be it."

A dark smile grew over his cruel face, Hock slammed down on the missile controls and sent a pair of projectiles streaming toward Kasumi.

Cursing, Kasumi dove to the ground, and executed a lightning fast roll away from her cover. The missiles smashed into the crate with an ear shattering crash that sent shockwaves across the landing.

The mercs rose up from their cover and shot at the thief, but much to

their disappointment, she was gone. Hock however was not going to let that stand up for too long as he moved to track her down.

"Even if you escape, I'll scour the galaxy for you Miss Goto!"

Swerving his gunship in a low, aggressive flight pattern, Hock manoeuvred the Mantis closer to the landing than he'd dared before. His eyes frantically searching the platform for his illusive prey as he repeated to shoot the Mantis' machine guns at both her companions to keep them pinned down.

Suddenly, the air began to stir and a black clad body materialised as if she'd been given form by the darkness. Kasumi gazed hatefully through the windscreen of the Mantis as she executed a precise shadowstrike on the mercenary just in front of her. She heard his choking scream as he collapsed and startled gunfire flew her way from the other mercenaries. Reactivating her cloak, Kasumi disappeared and leapt behind a pile of cargo boxes, wondering how she was supposed to get to that gunship. Or, more importantly, the evil man inside.

"We need to find a way to take him out and fast!" Kasumi shouted as she released a heated clip, before slapping in a new one.

Cortana was way ahead of them for that, having taken the time to study the Mantis.

"Chief, the shields on that gunship are similar to the kinetic barriers on some of the people. The Covenant plasma weapons should do a pretty good number on it." Cortana informed the Spartan from within his armor.

"If we flank him, we can draw his fire and confuse him. That should give us a clear shot at hitting him from behind. Ready to stretch your legs, Spartan?" Shepard called out over the gunfire exchanged between the Normandy team and Hock's goons, but never hearing Chief's A.I.

"Affirmative." John-117 replied as he placed the needle rifle on the magnetic plates on his back and exchanged it for the plasma rifle. The rapid fire would prove to be invaluable in the run.

"Kasumi prime a flashbang grenade. It will stun the mercenaries long enough for Chief to get to the other side of the platform." The former Spectre ordered.

"On it, Shep."

"I will bring the mercs out in the open. On my mark. Ready..." Shepard said as biotic energy started to flow through him.

Gunfire still flew overhead as Hock and his men for hire continued their assault.

Kasumi pulled out a flashbang and prepped herself, ready to throw on a moments notice.

Master Chief checked the battery power for the plasma rifle with his helmet's HUD. He was satisfied to know that the Covenant weapon still had plenty of plasma energy to go around.

"Go!"

At the sound of the war cry, Kasumi Goto threw the flashbang grenade over the crates that they were hiding behind. In a few seconds the grenade went off and let out a concussive roar and a blinding flash of light that disoriented the Eclipse and Hock.

Hock covered his eyes from the bright light, but still maintained control over his gunship. The mercenaries however stumbled around, moaning from the pain in their eyes.

As soon as the grenade detonated, Chief quickly leaped over the crates and made a dash across the platform.

The air around him warped as Shepard let out a burst of biotic energy aimed at the three remaining Eclipse mercs. Catching them unaware and lifting their bodies from the floor with brutal intensity, before tossing them violently into a nearby wall. When their bodies crumpled to the ground, they did not rise again.

The Spartan sprinted across the platform with his objective dead set in his mind.

Once Hock's eyes healed, he brought his attention back on the battlefield. He saw that all of his hired gunmen were dead, but the rich man knew that they were easily replaceable. Hock then spotted the green armored goliath running on the platform. He turned the gunship's mounted gun turret on the soldier and fired its payload.

"You've overstayed your welcome!" Hock called out.

Master Chief ran at a high speed, narrowly avoiding getting shot by the Mantis' turret.

"Chief, watch out!" Cortana warned inside of the Spartan's helmet when she picked up on a new incoming threat.

John-117 looked up during his run and caught a glimpse of a pair missiles heading in his way. The supersoldier dove to the ground, barely able to dodge the missiles and watch them destroy a feeble crate in a furious blaze. Master Chief hurriedly picked himself back up and fired his Covenant plasma rifle. A long stream of plasma bolts flew in a stagger line and then slammed into the Mantis gunship. Soon the plasma rifle overheated in Chief's hand, where the heat vents opened to allow the excess to dissipate.

Laughing, Hock watched the armored goliath and wondered if he was really desperate enough to believe that a few heated rounds would be enough to stand against a gunship. The corrupt bussiness man retargeted the cannons, and began to calibrate the new missile trajectory. That was to end this one once and for all, shame really, the armor and weapons would make a fine prize.

But then the monitors flashed red and pilot seat's display died.

"What the?" Hock asked in shock and confusion.

Suddenly, the Mantis juddered and he reached out to grab the controls as it swerved dangerously under the fire. Alarmed, he brought up the backup display and stared at the rapidly decreasing numbers that indicated that his kinetic shield... was failing. The corrupt businessman peered out of the cockpit and was shocked that there were black burnt marks on the armored hull. Some of the armor plate wasâ€melted, actually melted! Hock grinded his teeth together and slammed his hands on the controls in anger.

"There was no way a normal rifle could inflict such damage!"

"I don't know what kind of weapons your friend is using Goto, but I will find out soon enough once he is dead like your old boy toy. It will make me a fortune on the black market!" Hock declared.

Hock flew the Mantis back and hovered close to the ground. The underbelly of the gunship opened up where it dropped off four deactivated LOKI mechs. As soon as the mechs touched the floor they activated and drew their sidearms. Donovan Hock then moved the Mantis under the platform to let the shields recharge.

Shepard holstered his weapon and pulled out the kassa locust.

"What?! These guys again? I thought we killed them all in the garage?"

"I guess Hock kept a few with him. Oh well, they shouldn't be too tough." Kasumi added, though truthfully she was beginning to wonder how much longer this could possibly go on.

Shepard charged up his biotics and threw out a biotic pull. The blue orb flew and hit a mech. Fortunately all the LOKI mechs were close enough for the biotic move to affect all of them. All four mechs helplessly floated in the air.

"Take them down!" Shepard ordered.

The landing erupted in the deafening melody of synchronised gunfire as all three Normandy crewmates took aim and shredded the LOKIs, until nothing was left bar a few singed spare parts caught in the raging biotic vortex.

The Mantis gunship suddenly rose up from under the platform and brushed the floating spare parts aside.

"Remember me!" Hock shouted through the intercom.

Hock fired the mass accelerator cannons all across the platform, causing everyone to run for cover.

"Gunship's back, and with full shields! If I can get to the ship, I can take down the shields! But I will need a clear path to that gunship." It was then that Kasumi was struck with inspiration when she recalled how effective Master Chief's weapons were.

"Oh Chief, I don't suppose you are any good at making a clearing?" Kasumi asked with a playful and flirty tone.

"On occasion. I will see what I can do and radio you back."

"Please and thank you."

John-117 holstered the plasma rifle to his hip and reached for the beam rifle on his back. The super soldier stood up and aimed the Covenant sniper rifle at the gunship. Hock must have caught onto the act because at the same time the cannons on the gunship were directed at him.

"Let's not keep them waiting. Make it a good shot, Chief." Cortana said to her long time friend.

Chief zoomed in on the gunship with the scope through the rifle. He had Hock right in his line of sight, unfortunately Hock had his eyes on the Spartan as well.

Before the Spartan could pull the trigger, Hock already pressed his. A long stream of rounds rushed toward him and in a moment of horror, John-117 realised that there was no way he would be able to avoid them. Bracing his body for the impact he knew was coming, his finger twitched on the trigger and all he felt was the very tiny amount of recoil as his beam rifle went off, before he was assaulted by the brutal force of mass accelerator rounds pounding against his body.

The force knocked him off his feet and sent him tumbling. Crashing to the ground, the Spartan heard a dull whine as his MJOLNIR armour lost its shields.

"Chief!"

He heard Shepard's scream and a moment later, he rolled violently sideways across the tarmac and out of range of the gunship. He was alive, but hurting like hell as the medical systems of the MJOLNIR went to work on him.

Raising her head from cover, Kasumi felt her stomach lurch as her eyes fell on the Master Chief's body on the ground. The guy had done what he could, but was shot doing it, and it made her sick thinking that she might have gotten him killed.

"Damn it!"

Hock's voice raged toward her, and suddenly the gunship lurched, swerving in mid air so precariously that its underside scraped along the landing before veering upward again just as unexpectedly.

Narrowing her eyes, Kasumi stared at the Mantis' windscreen.

"Unbelievable..."

In the cockpit, Hock grunted in pain as he surged out and wrestled with the controls desperately, his eyes moving to the small, bullet shaped hole in his windscreen. Somehow that armored being fired a weapon that ignored the Kinetic Barriers he had on the Mantis and melted through the windshield, like if it was tissue paper. When he tried to move, however, a spasm of white hot pain shot through every muscle and tendon of his left arm and the Mantis bucked

uncontrollably.

"I've... been hit?" Hock said in absolute disbelief and surprise.

Dumbfounded, his burning gaze moved to the armored giant on the landing below him, who was struggling to stagger back to his feet. There was just no way...

And yet, the debilitating numbness coming over his left arm seemed to indicate otherwise.

There was no way he could handle the controls with only one arm!

Growling furiously, Hock felt a violently lashing wave of anger consume his body and then he was moving. Reaching for the controls with his good hand, he jerked the Mantis forward. If he was going down, he wasn't going down alone.

Kasumi quickly scanned the info on her omni-tool, looking for a weakness on the shield that would allow her to take it out. The Chief's shot through the windscreen of the Mantis had obviously damaged something essential; Hock looked like he could barely keep it under control any more. If there was ever a time for her to disable that kinetic defense, it was now. Before Hock could get his bearings back.

She heard the whining of the engines, but the whoosh of cool air rushing toward her wasn't something she'd expected. Her eyes snapped up, she realised with impending horror that the gunship was vigorously swerving toward her.

"Say hello to Keiji for me!" Hock yelled in a blinding fury.

All noise rushed at her at once, but all she could see was the growing dark armor of the gunship barrelling toward her. There wasn't even time for thought as a moment later, she was close enough to see the dark gleam in Hock's eye and then the impact.

It hit her like a bullet train, so violent that her body was flung into the air and spiralled until she smacked into the ground again several feet away. The collision knocked her breathless, and sent her head spinning, so sickeningly that she wasn't even sure she could move if her life depended on it.

But... she could still move... even though she should be dead...

"CHIEF!"

Across the landing, Shepard froze as the massive, hulking stern of the gunship slammed into the staggering figure of John-117. His eyes had been so fixated on Kasumi, on realising that there was nothing he could do to save her, that he hadn't even seen the green goliath streaking across the platform until his hands had shoved her out of the way.

Before his eyes, the gunship slammed violently into the ground - and his friend. Time seemed to stand still as the Mantis careened across

the floor and the Spartan was lost under the hulking mass. The gunship slid across the platform, sparks flaring from inertia. Eventually it came to a stop, when it smashed into the walls that the Normandy team came in from.

In a heartbeat, Kasumi picked herself off the ground where she and Shepard jolted to the crashed gunship. The two desperately searched around the wreckage for their Spartan ally, but there was no sign of him.

Suddenly, strange sounds came from the downed gunship. The sounds grew even more and soon an explosion of sorts happened at the ruins of the Mantis, before Shepard and Kasumi. They moved back from the Mantis and several charred metal plates from the wreckage moved down with a loud crash. Out came none other than the Master Chief.

He moved forward through the smoke, fire, and ruined metal with slow and somewhat unsteady footsteps. The Spartan's armor was blackened in some areas with some parts of the armor's edges chipped off as well. The blackened areas was due to the fire and the chipped areas was from the serious damage. There were also some scratches on parts of the armor, due to the possibility that the crash had dragged the Spartan on the floor.

Heavy dents were evident on the plating from getting rammed by the gunship, but apparently the Spartan was still alive as his armor was virtually intact. This was a testament to the way the UNSC built the MJOLNIR armor, only very potent massed firepower could truly destroy the armor due to the specially made Titanium Alloys and other materials used in the construction, along with the other features. But that did not mean John-117 was not the least bit injured.

Master Chief managed to make it to a nearby stack of crates and tried to steady himself. With his tired and wounded body, he nearly fell down but he was able to catch himself in time before he smacked his head on the nearby crates on one knee. He had activated the armor's Lock Down feature mere seconds before the gunship smashed into him, that was the reason he was not too badly injured. But his body was deep in a tremendous amount of pain. His vision swam in circles around him, causing him to be very dizzy.

He began to get up, but his muscles were severely bruised and he had no doubt that there would be serious over-extension, possibly torn muscle tendons, and internal haemorrhaging. He felt trauma in some areas of his ribs and had some difficulty breathing as well.

Chief felt what was undeniably symptoms of suffering a concussion, and also felt a god deal of ache running through his legs, left arm and right shoulder. He then recalled there was a lot of fluid built up inside his helmet. From the taste, the liquid in question was his blood. He took in some breaths, ignoring the pain that ignited from his ribs.

_"Damn...he just survived being hit by a crashing Mantis! I knew he was a super soldier, but THIS is really pushing it!" _The former Spectre thought to himself.

Shepard stared in disbelief as the Master Chief managed to get to his feet. He had yet to meet anyone to have survived such an impact. Sure he saw the insane things Chief had done, but to see him walk from

what would have been certain death was new. One thing was for sure, once the records of the mission came back there was going to be a LOT of questions, and reactions.

"By the Kami...he survived..."

Kasumi couldn't help but stare in awe, relief, and happiness as she saw that he was alive. When she realized that the Spartan had willingly rushed in to push her out of the way of Hock's gunship, she was filled with shock, guilt, and despair. The guy had willingly risked his life to help her, and took a hit that would have easily been death to her or anyone else. A lot of questions were on her mind on how he survived and who he was, as well as the desire to thank him for what he had done.

The two soon made it to him as John got up. She moved to his side to help him stabilize. Shepard did the same and was on John's other side, though Chief had to do most of the lifting since his armor weighed more than a ton.

"Easy there. You all right Chief?" The Commander said, trying his best to help his friend.

John-117 gave a slow breath and then replied.

"Been better. How is Miss Goto?"

Kasumi was amazed that he cared more for her than himself, that touched her a great deal as she spoke after a moment or so of silence.

"I am fine... thanks to you big guy."

"Good to know, ugh!"

He winced a bit and that convinced the others to hurry and call in for support; thankfully Joker replied that the shuttle was on its way. It was then that the Normandy commandos heard more noise from the gunship, except this came from the cockpit. They turned to see the cockpit's side move and a body crawled through the broken shards of glass. Out came Donovan Hock, bloody, burned, and in a state of sheer pain... but obviously alive.

Kasumi's eyes under her hood steeled up and spoke to the two.

"Go on ahead, I'll be right back."

Shepard watched her walk off. He knew what she was about to do; a very drastic thing.

"Kasumi," the Commander called out.

The thief suddenly stopped in her tracks, but did not look at him. He knew that she was still listening.

"Don't lose yourself."

She stood there for a mere second, and then kept on with the objective in mind.

Hock crawled across the platform, leaving a trail of blood behind him and ruining his good suit. He swore under his ragged breath; his body was a complete wreck, just like his prized gunship. He was only able to use one arm, as the other was utterly useless from getting shot by the strange weapon. He wasn't able to contact anyone as his omni-tool was on his bad arm, plus the fact that most of his personnel were dead.

But he knew that if he could just make it to his mansion, he could get some medical treatment. Then he could hunt down and get revenge on that conniving, thiefy little bitc...

"Hello Hock."

"Kasumi," The man hissed through gritted bloody teeth.

Hock then felt the barrel of a gun pressed against the back of his head.

"Have you come to finish the job, Miss Goto?"

The master thief then pressed the barrel of her gun harder against his head, earning a grunt from Hock.

"Not feeling so talkative, are we?"

"How did you find Keiji?" Kasumi demanded.

"Ah, closure. I didn't expect this from you, Miss Goto."

"Answer the question, before I kill you with your own gun." The thief threatened.

Hock silently growled, at how she stole his favorite weapon that killed two presidents, the Kassa Locust. He had worked his ass off to get that gun for his collection, and now it was going to be used to end his life. But his mood changed, when he realized that he had the upperhand. He held information that she needed to know, much like Keiji's graybox. He had a gut feeling that he was going to die, but if he was why not have some fun and torture his enemy. Besides, he still had one more change to strike at Kasumi and the best way to use it was to make her lower her guard.

"You two were good, almost the best. But no one can hide from the Shadow Broker. It took me a tidy sum to buy the data to find him, but it was well worth it." The man gloated with an evil chuckle.

"Once I tracked him down on Cyone, I threw nearly every resource I had to get him. I cornered your boy toy after a hell of a chase. I made him pay for costing me so much money. He pleaded and begged that I leave you alone, but I blasted him with that same gun your holding now. Oh the irony!" Hock laughed manically to make sure that he was twisting the proverbial knife into Kasumi's chest.

As he taunted her, he secretly reached under his suit with his good hand, for his concealed pistol. This did not go unnoticed by his target, however, as he had forgotten to take into account that Kasumi did not become the thief that she was if she did not have an eye for detail.

"But don't worry Miss Goto, because you will see him so..."

BANG!

Donovan Hock didn't get to finish, as Kasumi Goto was the first to pull the trigger.

Kasumi looked at the dead man and thought about Keiji and hoped that at least he would rest easy knowing his killer was now dead. She eyed the weapon and did find it ironic that she held the gun that ended Keiji's life, but believed that Donovan's blood had purified the kassa locust of her former love's blood. She resisted the urge to shoot the body of Donovan Hock again in anger; it would be waste of rounds and clips to be sure, but it was hard not to.

But Keiji would not want her to do that, be like an animal driven by hatred and she decided to leave Hock to die in his ruined mansion as the fires began to spread. This entire place was going to burn and for now, it was more than enough for her.

The thief spun on her heel and walked back to Shepard and Master Chief in an eerie silence. Only the sounds of birds and the fires of the gunship could be heard. The two quietly stared at her, but this silence would not last forever.

"Are you all right?" Shepard asked, while the shuttle finally came to land on the nearby pad.

"I don't know, but it's over, that's what counts right now."

"At least you finally put your ghosts to rest, and removing Hock is going to make things a lot easier for everyone."

"Thank you, both of you. This means a lot to me," the thief appreciated, glancing at both of the men in front of her with seriousness.

Both the Spartan and the ex-Spectre nodded their heads.

"Now come on, we have to go and get the Chief to medical," Shepard informed.

The trio stepped into the shuttle, with John-117 slumping down in the seats in pain. The Kodiak lifted off, leaving the mansion for good.

****Back on the Normandy in the Medical Bay****

The super soldier's well trained blue eyes watched how Dr. Chakwas paced in the room, while she messed with her datapad. The Master Chief was laying on the medical bed in the room, receiving a check up on his injuries. He didn't wear a hospital gown, but instead he was nearly nude if it not for the blanket covering below his waist. Purple bruises developed on his form along with some swelling.

John had no doubt that once this was over, Cortana was going to give him an earful back in the Cargo Bay. He expected that from his long time friend and partner, but he knew that she was only doing because

she cared. At the moment, the A.I. was stowed away in his armor that was lying on the floor in the very room he was in now, just like the time he got his checkup when he first met the good doctor.

Without looking away from her datapad, the medical officer addressed her patient,

"If I was not holding the data in my hands right now, I'd say you were playing a practical joke on me. Several torn muscle tendons on BOTH arms, a compound fracture in the thigh bone of your right leg from being tossed around. Multiple overexerted muscles in the upper body region, severe internal bleeding, a torn hamstring in your left leg, a dislocated right shoulder, and I also found a crack in BOTH your shoulder blades. These are the kinds of injuries that no one expects to see on a LIVING person who was in what amounted as a car crash. It's a mystery that you're not torn apart or turned into a mess in your armor!"

Dr Chakwas then observed the injured, but stabled super soldier,

"In the short time I have known you, I can tell you are going to be quite reckless. I'm starting to wonder how often I will see you in here, Spartan?" the Normandy's medic said.

The Master Chief couldn't help, but feel some measure of guilt with forcing the Doctor to tend to him like this.

Usually there was a team of hand picked doctors and nurses on deck with Dr. Halsey to oversee them when she could be present for medical treatment. The same thing happened in the case of the MJOLNIR, as there had been a group of highly trained engineers, techs, and scientists, led by Halsey who maintained, repaired, and upgraded their armor whenever they had the time to do so.

There was none of that here, and he doubted that Karin Chakwas was used to treating someone like him. Even Dr. Halsey, who despite being their surrogate mother for three decades and had seen them all in action, was always amazed at how much punishment he and the others could take. And she was just as doubly amazed at how much of her funding, medical supplies, and equipment was used to treat them. The sheer amount would have been enough to treat at least two platoons worth of Marines!

It would not take much to guess how their armor went as they did when it came to being brought back to fighting shape considering the extreme risk ops that he and his Spartan brothers and sisters took part in and led.

If he was not careful, he might end up depleting the funds of this mission's budget, and he might also end up consuming too much medical supplies which the others might need after an op. That in itself was asking for trouble. With that in mind, he made sure not to let himself get this badly injured in the future; he would become more of a liability than an asset if he got like this after every mission.

Not only that, his armor was still in need of repairs since it was still on a backup system so he had to avoid being like this. If he did not, then the MJOLNIR would become less effective, and while he

was taught not to rely on it, he knew better than to let it become useless. This began to make him think that perhaps he and Cortana should go back to the Dawn and salvage anything that could help with the repairs of his armor. The MJOLNIR needed special parts, tools, and equipment and he doubted anyone here in this reality dealt with something like the MJOLNIR Series.

"Sorry, ma'am."

Surprisingly, Karin Chakwas stopped her stride and sat at the edge of Chief's bed near his feet. She set the datapad on her lap and looked at the man in her care with a stern gaze.

"But in all of the years I have served as a doctor in the Alliance, I've come to learn that some of the most daring soldiers can have the biggest hearts. I know what you did for Miss Goto on the mission. It was very brave of you take such a blow for her, even if she was not exactly well known to you. I have no doubt that she appreciates what you did for her as well, such courage is rare in this day and age."

A small smile crept up on John-117's pale face.

"Thank you, ma'am."

The medical officer replicated the amusing facial gesture, though hers was a bit brighter. She then took a deep breath, glanced back at her datapad, and got off the bed.

"Now then, despite the intense hit you took, you're recovering seemingly well. I still don't entirely understand your augmentations, but your healing factor is working wonders. All you need is some rest, food, and you'll be fine. I will need you to stick close by the medical bay, so I can keep an eye on you. I wouldn't want you collapsing and have Grunt to carry you back here."

"Acknowledged," Chief said with a quick nod.

When the door hissed opened, both flashed their eyes at the entry.

Kasumi walked into the Med Bay and began to look for the Spartan. She saw that he was on one of the beds there and she finally got a good picture of the man under the armor. One of the first things she noticed was how pale he was. That struck the Japanese born thief a bit as she gazed at him and she began to guess that it had something to do with him being in his armor constantly. He had military cut hair, blue eyes, and a plain but rugged face with a few scars on it, incredibly tall and very muscular. She decided to get a lot closer and soon was greeted by the doctor with a smile of her own like a mother or a grandmother.

She had met the elderly woman before when she first arrived on the third floor. Dr. Chakwas was a very kind person at heart and could be serious but funny at the same time if it came to it. Her type of attitude and the motherly way she acted, made her all right in the Asian thief's book.

"Ah Miss Goto, I was not told you were coming. Are you injured as well?"

"Not really, I'm fine and still alive, thanks to your big friend over there. I actually came to thank him. How is he?"

Chakwas sighed a bit and replied.

"He's recovering quite well actually. With some rest and proper care, he should be up in no time. He's a lot easier to take care of than some of the other bone headed soldiers from back in the day. Anyway, I need to pick up something quick to eat. Do you mind watching him for a bit?"

The thief glanced at the Spartan behind the doctor and then back at Chakwas, with a small smile.

"Sure, it would give me chance for me to talk to him."

A tiny giggle escaped from the elderly woman.

"Good luck with that one, he's very much the stoic type. Either way, thank you, I will be back shortly."

"Okay Doc, see you later."

Chakwas placed her datapad on the counter and left the two alone.

Kasumi went forward to sit down at the nearby chair as Chief gave her a nod in greeting. He had a very interesting body, he was very pale just like his face, he had scars on his body that look like they came from a different variety of weapons. He was definitely fit and hard looking. He was perfectly proportioned and coupled with his appearance... well was very unique in her mind.

"How are you Miss Goto?"

"I'm fine, which is more than I can say for you. You were pretty banged up when it happened, how you managed to remain alive, much less whole is amazing. You got rammed by a gunship after all."

"I've had worse."

"Had worse than being rammed by a gunship? Hmm, now there's a story there."

As she sat down next to him, she could not help but admire the now naked Spartan. Her eyes were drawn to the firm, dominantly etched ridges and curvatures of his muscle below skin, revealed in all their glory thanks to the blanket that was only concealing half of him. But even if she was eager to see him fully revealed, what she was already seeing was well worth it. This very much confirmed the rumors all over the ship she heard about him being very attractive when out of the armor.

"_Mmmm... 6'10 and perfectly proportioned to boot. Muscle tone... nice. And I've always had a weakness for scars. He's no model, but damn... there's something about him that makes me want to keep looking. I don't blame Miss Lawson for being rather intense when it concerns him. I wonder if he likes Japanese girls with a penchant for kleptomania...'_-" Kasumi thought in lust mixed with a whole train of

ideas.

"Well, I thought I'd come by and thank you for what you did. I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for you. You really gave me a hell of a scare when you jumped in front of the gunship."

"You're welcome Miss Goto. You're part of the team and I had to help you."

Though oddly stated, Kasumi saw that he was sincere and commented with a smile.

"You sure know how to make a woman feel special."

Chief gave a slight smile and that was a victory in her mind. The familiar hiss of a door opened behind them, signaling that the doctor had returned. A plan came to Kasumi's mind as she saw Chakwas come back.

"Anyway, get better John all right?"

The super soldier nodded and Kasumi gave him a gentle kiss on the cheek.

Kasumi got up and left, but not before she cloaked herself. She quickly, but quietly ran up to the counter and took the datapad.

"The food that Gardner cooks up may not be cuisine, but it is better than anything they served in the Alliance. Alright lets take... a look... at..." But Dr. Chakwas didn't finish her sentence, since something was missing.

The medic rummaged through her papers and supplies on the counter, but couldn't find the datapad.

"Is something wrong, doctor?" Chief asked, picking up on her minor distress.

"I can't find my datapad. Strange, I could've sworn I left it on the counter." She replied while she inspected inside some cabinets. "Maybe I accidentally left it in the cafeteria? Wait just one second, I'll go check."

When the medical officer left again, the thief realized that was her signal to make her move.

Master Chief began to relax a bit, but already his senses were on high alert. Something had stirred him up and he began to look around. Years of fighting the Covenant also meant that more than once he had to deal with their Spec Ops troopers and assassins and those usually were armed with active stealth generators.

Several times, he had fought them when they all wanted the honor and glory of killing him so he, like all veteran UNSC soldiers and Spartans knew what to look for as the active camo created shimmering effects in the air when the Spec Ops trooper was close. And if one watched carefully, at closing medium distance, anyone could see the shimmering effect plus the camo did not hide the glow of plasma from their weapons. He scanned the area carefully, while running through

his head what he knew of active camo in his reality and here.

As far as he knew, the only ones armed with this reality's equivalent, the Tactical Cloak, were the Infiltrators, but none of them were on this ship. The only one would be...

He spotted the shimmering near to the left and then spoke.

"Ka..."

An invisible hand came over his mouth that moment and he had to fight his battle hardened instincts from grabbing Kasumi and harming her. He had no idea just what was it she was planning, but he knew that she was not a dangerous person to him and the crew. So she must have wanted to talk to him without Chakwas noticing. Soon his thoughts were proven true when her voice came to him, only this time she was speaking in a low and rather, interesting tone.

"Shhh...it's all right big guy, just relax."

Master Chief nodded slightly and Kasumi spoke once more in an enticing tone.

"I misplaced the pad a bit so I could have some extra time, though I decided to make this a little more interesting."

The super soldier wondered what she meant, until she made her move as she raised one leg over and sat on top the Spartan, straddling him. Chief couldn't help, but stay still as the invisible thief mounted him. He had no idea of what to make of the sudden situation. He has never experienced something like that before, something so intimate.

He could feel her weight on his own body, which was not much. In that moment her cloak faded away, but without making a sound and soon she was there. He could see her face under her hood and could tell that she was very attractive and showed her Japanese ancestry.

Kasumi couldn't help but admire the feel of the Spartan below her. She felt his warmth through her suit and it was exciting her a great deal. The heat and hardness of his male form was very good and the look on his face was also exciting her a great deal.

She then placed her hands to the side of his face and began to lean towards him. John decided to speak to her at that point.

"What are you..."

But he didn't get to finish, for his lips were covered by another. He had NO idea how to respond to this as Kasumi did not say anything else as she soon kissed him while his mouth was open.

She poured her emotions into the kiss, while she slowly started to make her move.

John-117 was frozen in place, he had absolutely no idea what to do. Kasumi Goto was doing something that no one had done to him before. It was foreign to him, yet strangely pleasant.

She moved her body down a bit more and began to press herself to him, showing her impressive flexibility. She could feel her body move into his own and felt the warmth of his form all over the front of her chest through her clothes. Her actions seemed to make him tense and she decided to use her tongue slowly, licking her lips and that made Chief gasp a bit.

The spontaneous act was going too fast for him. He needed to slow down and analyze the situation, perhaps even talk to her. To calm her down, he touched her hip with his hand. Instead he got a reaction he didn't predict.

"Mmmm!"

It seemed she squealed in joy to it, which confused him only more.

The kiss soon ended and Kasumi moved back, licking her lips slowly and lustfully to let him see it. She then spoke in a sensual tone.

"You know how to make me excited Chief, and if you liked that kiss, there's more where that came from."

Kasumi soon moved off gently and faded away from him, while cloaked, but not before giving him a flirtatious smile.

The Spartan was speechless, still trying to make sense of the entire situation.

It was also here that Miranda Lawson and Commander Shepard came in, unknowingly allowing Kasumi to slip by and leave. Dr Chakwas also came back with the pad, and none of them were aware that the thief had left the area. But John-117 was as he saw her decloak and give him a sway of her hips in a seductively cute pose, before the door closed.

"You got pretty banged up out there, Chief. Just wanted to check in on you, see how you're doing. How are you feeling?" Shepard asked.

Master Chief was still stunned after what Kasumi had done to him. But he had to act fast and recollect himself.

"I've had worse injuries sir."

Shepard was impressed by the Master Chief. When they got back to the ship, the Spartan still had the strength to remove his armor when he had Grunt help move him into the Medical Bay. After putting Chief in the doctor's hands, needless to say there was a lot of questions directed at him on how the mission went and what happened to the Spartan. The most obvious one was Miranda herself, and she was very intense in the questioning once he left the Medical Bay when Chakwas was then working on the man.

"Let's stay away from worse. I wouldn't want you in here all the time, especially when we go up against the Collectors."

Cutting the light attitude in the air like a knife, Miranda spoke up next,

"Doctor, what kind of injuries does he have?"

Karin Chakwas handed her the datapad, to which the Cerberus officer read over quickly. Though she didn't reveal any facial expressions, Miranda was very impressed. The damage John had taken would have easily killed a normal Alliance Marine, but he came out with a few yet somewhat serious wounds. This showed her one of his many fascinating enhancements. She too, healed faster than the average human, but it would seem that Chief heals even faster.

Her train of thought was interrupted by the Commander,

"How long will he be out?"

"With his augmentations, it's hard to tell. Still, if I had to make an estimated a guess, it would be around a week." the medical officer pointed out.

Shepard had to stop himself from blowing an amusing whistle at the amazing rate the super soldier would recover, but instead he stayed professional and confident.

"That doesn't sound too bad. Well, I just wanted to say thanks for saving Kasumi, that took a lot of guts. Take it easy, all right? I need you up and reporting for duty ASAP, you hear me Spartan?"

Master Chief responded with a quick nod,

"Understood."

Smirking a victorious smile, Commander Shepard turned and left the medical bay. He needed to head to the galaxy map in the next floor above, to plot their next destination. He hadn't received the next set of dossiers from the Illusive Man yet, but he was sure there was another assignment he could do. With a bustling and active galaxy filled with several different alien species, one could never be bored.

Dr Chakwas, herself stayed around to tend to her patient. She merely stepped to the other side of the room, to make a schedule for certain treatments for the Spartan. With most advanced and best medical equipment that Cerberus could afford, the super soldier would be up relatively soon, which she had to work to make it happen.

This left Miranda Lawson watching over John. The two only stared at each other in a ghostly silence. The only haunting sounds that could be heard was Dr Chakwas typing away on her datapad.

Now John knew he wasn't the best at reading people or anything that dealt with social skills, but as he gazed into the Cerberus officer's blue eyes, he could see a mixture of emotions. He wondered what sort of emotions were they or why was she being so quiet with him? This was not the usual attitude that he expected from her.

After an entire minute of an absence of sound, Miranda finally spoke up,

"You were being brash and irresponsible," she said in a monotone

voice.

Right away, Chief figured out that anger was one of things that Miss Lawson was feeling. Instead of replying with words, he just raised a questioning eyebrow, signaling for her to continue.

"Risking your life like that was bloody foolish. Why did you jeopardized yourself for some petty errand?"

"I had to save Miss Goto. She's significant to the mission as well," the Spartan rebutted.

The Cerberus officer knew he was right, for the thief had astounding stealth and infiltration skills that would be a benefiting factor to the Collector mission. But she still had a lot on her mind to say to the man.

"And you don't think you aren't? With your abilities, you could replace most of the people we are recruiting against the Collectors. I've seen you how you fight, and you live up to what a super soldier can do. Cerberus can't afford to lose you."

"I'm not here for Cerberus," the Master Chief declared in a cold tone.

The response caused the Australian woman to narrow her eyes, and clenched her fist tight.

"You're doing this for humanity, you fought a nearly thirty year war for the survival of man kind, and Cerberus' ultimate goal is to help the human race. Like it or not, we're on the same side, John," Miranda replied with an even icier voice.

Chief held his tongue as he couldn't think of a way to dignify a reply. What she pointed out was indeed correct. Both Cerberus and the UNSC had the same ambitions of advancing their species. True, that Cerberus had some extreme methods to completing their objectives, but they were very similar to the Office of Naval Intelligence from his universe.

Surprisingly, Miranda took a deep breath to relax herself to a degree. She loosened her hands, and set them to lean on the table, nearly touching the nude Spartan-II without her knowing.

"Next time, try thinking before leaping."

The phrase hit him like a ton of bricks as Chief Mendez once taught him that during his Spartan training. Though, he did admit that he was in fact thinking when he fought Donovan Hock: save Kasumi.

"Next time," he parroted in his usual deep tone to agree with her.

With that said, she let go of the bed, and started to make her way out of the medical bay, except she stopped when the automatic door slid open. Pausing with her hand on the door, Miranda tilted her chin just enough to look back over her shoulder at the wounded super soldier. Her fingers curled around the doorframe tightened just a little and she turned her gaze away quickly.

"I expect you to be on your feet soon and reporting for duty, John," she said softly before she walked away from him.

Dr. Chakwas had ignored the conversation namely since she had her duties, but still she kept her ears open and she couldn't help but be amused to some degree about the situation. A second ago, before her were two people who by all rights and origins were the finest examples of humanity in many ways and they were not getting that well along. However like any woman, she was quick to sense that despite the icy tone Miranda had, there was some measure of worry and warmth she had for the Spartan. And after seeing how similar the two were compared to each other, she was quick to see the why. Nonetheless, she had to agree that he should be more careful and as such, she soon finished the schedule for his recovery.

"Here, this is the time table I made for your treatments, Master Chief."

"Thank you, ma'am."

"You know, it would be much easier if you had an omni-tool to alert you about the treatments, instead of having to memorize them. Maybe whenever you see Shepard again, you could put in a request for one," the doctor advised.

"Maybe," the super soldier replied, as he did see some perks to having such a device.

"We will need to apply another batch of medi-gel in a few minutes, along with some stimpacks."

John took a look at the schedule and began to follow the routine being given to him into his head. However, he started to wonder just how would he approach the subject of heading back to the Dawn to get what he needed to fix the MJOLNIR back up to full specs.

...

**And end chapter! Well I hoped you enjoyed the chapter. A lot of action in the beginning, and some emotional character drama at the end. **

Will Master Chief get a chance to go back to the UNSC frigate, 'Forward Unto Dawn?' Will Chief ever get his armor fixed?

Has Kasumi taken an interest in our Spartan-II? Will there be a love triangle between MirandaxJohn-117xKasumi if so?

Will Chief get an omni-tool?

Could there be anything surprising on the 'Forward Unto Dawn' if they go back to it?

**Whose Shepard going to recruit next? **

A ton of questions that might get answered in the next chapter! Be sure to leave a review as I love reviews on just about anything!

**Now some of you might be wondering that if Master Chief could

actually survive getting hit by a gunship. Well that is a tough question that I'm also confused about. Part of me thinks he can, while a smaller part of me thinks he probably couldn't. I dunno.**

Next on the update list: either the rewritten version of chapter four and a new chapter for my Halo/Tomb Raider crossover, or start a new Halo/Mortal Kombat crossover that I have been thinking about recently. Either way both stories will receive updates!

9. Chapter 9

**Hello there readers. Now I normally don't make these 'author notes only posts,' in fact I was never going to make any of these type of posts. I always thought it was bad for a writer to do this, since it's a fake tease unless they have a preview of the story in it. However, under these terrible circumstances I will make an exception for this one time. That is why all the words are in bold, it's an author's note post. While I will talk about this story later on in this post, there is some troubling news I need to tell you all.
**

It pains me to say this, but we have lost one of our own. Freedom Guard, whose full name is Salvador R. Balleza has passed away. On the 5**th**** of August he had went through cardiac arrest. Cardiac arrest is a sudden stop in blood circulation due to the failure of the heart to contract effectively or at all. When Freedom Guard went through it, they were unable to resuscitate him.**

**We have lost a great writer. Salvador had written forty-three stories, two concept ideas, and one story challenge. He had a vast knowledge of several categories, ranging from Halo, Mass Effect, Justice League, Marvel, G.I. Joe, Vandread, and so many more. With his vivid imagination he was able to expand on those categories' and write his own works of fiction. Sure his characters weren't always in character, and he had some run-on sentences, but damn it he had a natural talent of capturing someone's attention. Freedom Guard wrote in the third-person point of view in all of his stories. He did a wonderful job in writing characters' thoughts, opinions, and expressions in his story. **

**I was able to see how dedicated he was to writing and to others inspiring to write. When he posted a chapter, it had a numerous amount of pages worth of content, all up in a short amount of time, much quicker than I can ever hope to be. **

**Yes to some they will be losing a writer, but to me, and few others, we are losing a colleague and a dear friend. If you look up in the author's notes in most of my chapters, you will see Freedom Guard's name up there, and how I thank him for helping me. With almost every problem I ever had, whether writing related or even personal, I came to Freedom Guard and he was happy to lend a hand. He was there to offer advice when I needed it, and bounce ideas off when I felt creative. Every writer usually hits that old problem 'writer's block,' but when that happened to me, Freedom Guard would write out examples how an idea could happen, making writer's block all the more easier to breeze through. He was even able to look over my chapters before I posted them, whether he asked for them or I asked. He was practically my own Beta-Reader, and one of the best I ever had.

**

One of the things he taught was how to manage my stories. I, like many writers, have ideas just begging to be written down. Freedom Guard showed me that while it's good to have that light bulb flashing, you got to keep yourself in check and not overwork yourself. Looking at all of his stories, he told me how having so many made it extremely difficult to update them all and satisfy the readers. So now I write down any ideas on my profile page so I can eventually get back to them. And when I post a new story, I make sure it's entirely thought-out so I don't stop abruptly.

**Without Freedom Guard, I bet I wouldn't even have half the amount of chapters posted now. And the ones that would be posted would lack some creativity. Did he make me the type of writer I am today? No, I can't give him all of that credit. But he was a part of the ones that did. I know for a fact he was also the one who inspired many more writers to be at the computer, and he was there to help the ones who asked. Sometimes he would actually seek out others that could use the help, which was how we met. He came to me when I was writing my Halo/Mass Effect crossover. I was brand new to fanfiction, and a terrible writer at the time. But he messaged me telling me I did a good job for a beginner, and have a lot of potential. He helped me reach some of that potential. And we have been friends ever since, for many years. **

**Freedom Guard, you may be gone, but you will not be forgotten, not by me at least. You may not be here anymore to give me advice, but I will always think 'what would Freedom Guard do?' With your stories out there, I hope others will take some inspiration from them. In this life and the next, you will always be my friend. **

**Rest in peace, Freedom Guard. With all of the work you did for fanfiction and others, you deserve that peace. **

Now regarding the story, man it feels selfish saying that after the dedication to Freedom Guard. But here it goes.

**With my Halo/Mass Effect, yes I'm still continuing it. It's just... I am doing a huge rewrite over it. I don't mean going back to fix a few simple grammar problems or rewriting sentences. I do have my reasons for why. There are too many plot mistakes, and its too similar to a friend of mine's crossover. **

**The plot mistakes are pretty evident, they mainly conflict how a character would approach a situation. Some examples are The Master Chief not blowing up the Forward Unto Dawn when he leaves it so no one can take any technology, the Chief giving a tiny bit of information to Miranda about the Plasma Pistol, and getting John-117's armor damaged when Hock's Mantis crashes into him. I did have solutions for these mistakes that were going to be incorporated into the story. Like with the Forward Unto Dawn I was going to have the Chief go back to the ship to get it upgraded to Halo 4/5 variant so he would be able to use armor and Spartan abilities, which before that happens he would run into the Flood aboard it and then it would start his own Loyalty mission like in Mass Effect 2. The Master Chief would have to kill off the Flood on a Batarian ship and a station similar to Omega where he would encounter new Flood forms that infect Mass Effect species. With Miranda and the Plasma Pistol, she was suppose to get very little information and since the UNSC are

confused by how Covenant technology is made, it was going to frustrate Miranda even more since she practically know nothing about it. And with Chief's armor, like I said it was meant to be fixed and upgraded to the Halo 4/5 variant. **

**Plus the story is too similar to a friend of mine's own crossover with the same categories. Back then when we were both first writing them at the same time, we were having fun coming up with ideas for our stories. We admitted to each other they would be incredibly similar to each other, and we were okay with that at the time. But now I am not alright with it. He is an extremely talented writer who is leaps and bounds better than me. Whenever he would post a chapter, it was actually depressing. I know I should be happy for him, and I am, but it made me feel inadequate as his quality was far superior than mine, along with he has more chapters than me. If you can guess who the writer is... well bonus points to you. **

**So now I am doing a rewrite of 'From Hell to Hell.' At the moment its still in the idea process. Hopefully it will be thought out and I can get to work on rewriting the chapters. **

**See you all soon. **

**Rest in peace, Freedom Guard. **

End
file.